00097220

BOMBAY BRANCH

OF THE

ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

TOWN HALL, BOMBAY.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 24 February, 2016

THE

WORKS

OF

SAMUEL PARR, LL.D.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S, CURATE OF HATTON, &c.

WITH

MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS,

AND

A SELECTION FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE,

BY

97220

JOHN JOHNSTONE, M. D.

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY, AND OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF LONDON, &c.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

W-a-1H

LONDON:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1828.

922.242
Par/Joh/Wor
97220

PRINTED BY J. B. NICHOLS AND SON, 25, PARLIAMENT STREET.

TO THE READER.

THE Editor of the Sermons contained in the two following volumes, thinks it right to state that some of them had been selected by Dr. Parr himself for publication many years before his death; and fragments of an intended preface have been found, of which the largest, and most corrected portion, will be seen at the end of this address. Dr. Parr's motives for not carrying into effect the intention stated in the fragment alluded to, are not distinctly known. They probably may have arisen partly from the irksomeness of selection, and the difficulties of transcription, at a time when the Doctor could ill afford to pay an amanuensis, and partly from his improved circumstances, which may have made this mode of increasing his income unnecessary. The Editor knows that he has now published some of those which were selected by Dr. Parr himself, but has reason to believe that several of those now pub-

lished were written since that selection was made, and consequently could not then have formed a part of it. If the present Sermons should be favourably received, there are many more that may come before the public. In making the present selection the Editor has been chiefly guided by the knowledge that the Sermon was intended for publication by Dr. Parr, or by considerations of its importance, its variety in point of style or matter, (for he has wished to exhibit specimens of his familiar instruction to his parishioners, as well as of his more profound and learned disquisitions,) and sometimes its clearness; for many of the Sermons, being either originally written on loose papers, or on papers which have since been loosened and displaced, are almost in the state of Sybil's leaves, which it is extremely difficult, and sometimes impossible to arrange, when the connecting parts appear to have been lost. A volume of extremely beautiful fragments might be formed from these relics, and from detached passages added as after thoughts, but displaced, and not referable to any certain part of the context.

The Editor fears also, notwithstanding all the pains that have been taken to print the present volumes correctly, that now and then errata have crept in, owing rather to the transcriber than the

printer, and almost inseparable from so difficult and illegible a manuscript.

The Sermons have been revised since they came from the press by a learned friend, who has pointed out some errors as important, a list of which will be found at the end of each volume, and for which the indulgence of the reader is respectfully solicited.

Fragment of Dr. Parr's intended Preface, written apparently about 1794.

The following Sermons have no claim upon the curiosity or taste of the public, either from depth of research, or originality of matter. They seldom profess to solve the speculative difficulties of religion, but are chiefly calculated to explain and to enforce its practical duties. I would not, however, presume to send them into the world, if I thought that they would be wholly useless to others, or quite dishonourable to myself. But for the imperfections that may be found in them it is proper for me to apologise, and of the apology, which I know to be true in itself, I may hope that to the candid reader it will not be wholly unsatisfactory. Be it remembered, then, that far the greatest part of these discourses were composed under the pressure of poverty, amidst the distractions of care, and after the fatigues of a most laborious and irksome employment. Though I have for some time past retired from the more vexatious circumstances of my engagements as a teacher,

yet I have never been fortunate enough to meet with those opportunities and encouragements without which attention becomes gradually languid, and exertion is intolerably oppressive. I am not, even at the present moment, induced by any motives of vanity to commit these Sermons to the press. But they were entirely useless to me in my humble situation, and, in my very confined circumstances, I could not, without gross indiscretion, refuse the advantageous terms which were proposed to me by my bookseller. To these prudential considerations may be added the request of some friends, in the soundness of whose judgment, and the sincerity of whose regard, I can safely confide.

CONTENTS OF VOLUME V.

SERMONS.

Sermon.		Page.
I.	The Man of God sent from Judah to Bethel	3
II.	Ditto	26
III.	The Paralytic	59
IV.	Ditto	70
V.	Ditto	82
VI.	The House of Prayer	102
VII.	On the Death of George the Third	139
VIII.	Ditto	161
IX.	On the Opening of the Window in Hatton Church	194
X.	On the Beneficial Effects of Labour	237
XI.	On Confirmation	275
XII.	On the Habit of Judging Unrighteously	303
XIII.	Ditto	320
XIV.	On Faith	339
XV.	On Avoiding the Appearance of Evil	364
XVI.	On Conscience	388
XVII.	Ditto	412
XVIII.	Ditto	441
XIX.	Ditto	464
XX.	Assize Sermon	486
XXI.	Defence of David	518

Sermon.		Page.
XXII.	On Christ going up to Jerusalem with his Parents	583
XXIII A.	Ditto	603
XXIV A.	On the Sin of Ingratitude . .	623
XXV A.	The Parable of the Marriage Feast	641
XXV B.	Infirmary Sermon . . .	658
XXVI A.	Friendly Society	679
XXVII A.	Assize Sermon	690
XXVIII A.	Visitation Sermon . . .	699

SERMONS.

SERMON I.*

THE MAN OF GOD SENT FROM JUDAH TO BETHEL.

1 KINGS xiii. 21, 22.

"*Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee; but camest back and hast eaten bread and drank water in the place of which the Lord did say to thee—eat no bread and drink no water, thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.*"

RELIGION, intended as it is for the instruction and government of rational beings, must be fairly and directly addressed to their reason. Yet in the exercise of this faculty, it well becomes us to distinguish between the arguments which rest on limitations and defects of our knowledge, and those which are suggested by it, when it is real and clear—between the abstruse researches of metaphysics, where we see little, and the moral fitness of actions, in which we are both interested and enabled to see much—between final causes, which in the utmost variety of their operations, and amplitude of extent are comprehended only by the being who controls them, and intelligible events, the existence of which,

* Written Sept. 1785.

implying no contradiction, may be ascertained by human testimony, and occasionally form a part of human experience.

From ignorance of the customs which prevailed in ancient nations, or from inattention to the manner which characterizes ancient composition, have arisen far the greater part of those mistakes which exercise the sophistry of the sceptic, and the raillery of the scoffer. Ideas, suggested by scenes that pass before our own eyes, are transferred to remote ages. The indefinite language which is employed to express our sentiments of relations and mixed modes, exposes us to perpetual misapprehension; the want of correspondent terms introduces partial or perverted views of the meaning which the writer assigned to the original expression; the notions of right and wrong which have been established by the improvements of philosophy, or the precepts of Christianity, are precipitately and indiscriminately applied to moral agents, who neither cultivated the one nor were enlightened by the other. Many local and temporary circumstances have been tried by the test of general rules, to which they are professedly exceptions; and the partialities we feel in favour of national manners have checked our approbation or aroused our resentments, in contemplating those actions which were performed in different states of civilization, amidst the prevalence of different opinions, and under the influence of different laws; to these and similar causes may be ascribed the gross misconceptions into which men have fallen when they have presumed to sit in judgment upon the

moral government of God, whether as it is collected from profane history, or as it is revealed in the sacred writings.

While, however, the sarcasms of the unbeliever are confined to those points of sublime speculation, which are unfolded to us by the wisdom, and supported by the authority of the Deity himself, we may be content with retaining our own belief, in humbleness of spirit and in sincerity of heart; but when his censures are levelled against the moral attributes of God—when the Judge of all the earth is represented as acting inconsistently with the plainest dictates of reason, and the essential rules of virtue—when the subjects to which those censures relate contain not the more abstract revelation of a doctrine, but the unequivocal record of a fact, the assaults of our adversaries then assume a more serious form; they are pregnant with more destructive consequences; they are no longer appeals to our ignorance, but to our knowledge; they call upon us to defend by argument the cause which we have espoused from conviction—to explain whatever has been misconceived, and to vindicate whatever has been misrepresented. I mean not, however, to affirm, that, in all cases, this defence is possible, in the extent to which we may be induced sometimes to expect from our curiosity, sometimes to demand from our rashness, and sometimes to wish from our piety.

In contemplating religion, both natural and revealed, we meet with difficulties, which no depth of learning, no diligence of inquiry, no felicity of con-

jecture, will enable us completely to solve; we are compelled to acknowledge that God's ways are not our ways; we have no refuge but in those conclusions which are suggested, and no doubt warranted by that which we do understand clearly. I mean, that in every dispensation of his providence, whether ordinary or extraordinary—that in the trial of our virtue, as well as in the reward of it—that in the occasional sufferings of the righteous, and in the temporary prosperity of the wicked, the supreme Governor of the Universe cannot but do right. Where, indeed, the impediments to knowledge are really and evidently insurmountable to the slow approaches of industry, and the enterprising efforts of genius, the consciousness of ignorance, though it cannot remove doubt, ought surely to repress presumption; but while we resist the delusions of intellectual pride we should exercise our caution against superstitious timidity, which startles at phantoms—against undistinguishing zeal, which grasps at shadows—against laziness, which sinks under every difficulty, however inconsiderable—and against indifference, which trifles with every truth, however momentous.

Now the topics which are presented to us by the holy Scriptures are always important enough to deserve our most collected and vigorous attention; and as to the perplexity into which we are thrown from our seeing them through a dim or crooked medium, it is often removed when they are placed before us in a different and perhaps unperverted point of view. The doubts which arose from some

particular or collateral circumstance gradually give way, when we have reached a distinct and comprehensive view of the general case; what is clear in itself communicates at least some portion of light to that which is obscure; in one moment, perhaps, we are obliged to suspend our decisions, in the next we meet with some happy clue which faithfully conducts us through the labyrinth in which we long have wandered, relieves us from the anguish of suspence, and lends new confidence to our faith by the most evident and solid conclusions of our reason. Such are the triumphs which the pious and sincere believer experiences when he meditates upon the word and works of God—when he searches into the designs of the Almighty, not only under the habitual conviction that they are righteous and holy, but under the immediate impression of an honest and humble hope, that they may be found such by diligent and unprejudiced inquiry, when he is more anxious to struggle with difficulties than to start them—and when he finds a greater pleasure in confirming his faith than in gratifying his vanity. In this spirit, which is equally remote from the frowardness of unbelief and the slavishness of credulity, I shall endeavour to explain to you the awful and interesting story to which the words of my text relate.

A man of God comes down from Judah to Bethel upon a most important errand, and he is commanded during the execution of it to eat no bread and drink no water. Another man of God, who dwelt at Bethel, hears of his arrival, overtakes

him on his return, and persuades him by a pretended commission from heaven, to take that refreshment which had before been forbidden. He unsuspectingly does take it; he is instantaneously arraigned by the very man who had overcome his resolution; he is met by a lion in the way, and is slain. Is, then, the fate of this man reconcileable to the justice of the Deity, so far as we are able to explore his operations, and so far as we are accustomed to approve of them? My answer is, that it is most fully and most visibly reconcileable to them. On the first blush of the story, we may, it is true, verify the observation of an ancient writer, who pronounces it difficult for a man to be at once compassionate and wise. As the subject is curious in itself, as it strikes at the root of those excuses which we readily admit from others, from the secret hope of employing them successfully for ourselves, I must trespass a little on your patience; for on this, as on many other occasions, we shall conceive the several parts more distinctly by spreading our attention through the whole. Attending only to the interview which passed between the two prophets, we are disposed to forgive the credulity of the one, and lothe the treachery of the other. That credulity, however, was not only a weakness but a crime; it was complicated with impiety and disobedience; it deserved the punishment which it incurred; it throws no reflection on the judicial dispensations of the Deity, and it contains a most salutary warning for his creatures to be for ever on the watch, not only against the infirmity of their under-

standings, but the deceitfulness of their hearts. This position I shall endeavour to establish by examining at large, in this discourse, and in one that will be delivered this day sevennight, the various parts of the sacred narrative.

The reign of Jeroboam is branded with the strongest and most indelible marks of infamy by the sacred historians. His life was distinguished by the most daring profaneness, and the most incorrigible profligacy. His politics, too, were base and crooked; for they tended to divide the people, whom he ought to have united, and to subvert the religion which he was bound to support. That noble fabric of government which was founded by the hands of God himself, which rested upon the joint pillars of religious and civil authority, and which had been adorned by the virtues of David, and the wisdom of Solomon, was now loosened to its basis.

The twelve tribes were torn asunder by the most violent shock of intestine division; two only adhered to the cause of their lawful prince; but the rest had eagerly flocked to the standard of a criminal and a fugitive, who, to escape the merited indignation of Solomon, had dwelt in Egypt. With a craftiness of spirit, which well became the unsoundness of his pretensions, Jeroboam sheltered himself from the consequences of one great crime, by venturing upon other and greater crimes. He cast off all means of reconciliation between the tribes, who were now severed from each other; he inflamed political discord by the addition of religious zeal; he seduced into idolatry the persons, whom he had

before incited to rebellion, and he set up two calves of gold, the one in Bethel, the other in Dan. Before them he invited his subjects to fall down and worship, and to the authority of his command, he added the sanction of his example.

Such was the man whose crimes and whose sufferings render him a distinguished actor in the story of my text, and of whom it is again and again recorded, that he made Israel to sin. In governing the state of Israel he thus supported the pretensions of an usurper by the measures of a tyrant; and after overthrowing the law of Moses, he at once shewed the hardiness of an innovator, the subtlety of an hypocrite, and the intolerance of a bigot. But a cloud of calamities was now gathering over the deluded nation, and the hand of avenging heaven was stretched forth over the unprincipled and unfeeling wretch who swayed the sceptre.

Jeroboam was standing before the altar, arrayed probably in all the pageantries of royalty, and eagerly employed in performing those fantastic and ostentatious ceremonies, which are intended to throw a veil over the absurdities of polytheism and the deformities of superstition. At this instant there came a man of God to humble the arrogance, and to chastise the impiety of a prince, who was not only corrupt, but had promoted corruption, and who by the stratagems of his policy, and the perversion of his power, had prevailed upon ten tribes at once to revolt from their king, and to apostatize from their God. The holy man came from Judah, that is, from one of the tribes, whom

the wiles of Jeroboam had not seduced, nor his menaces intimidated. He came by the word of the Lord, that is, of the very being, whose subjects Jeroboam had treacherously divided, whose laws he had openly insulted, and whose worship he had peremptorily interdicted. He came to the very altar, that had been raised up in undisguised and direct opposition to the majesty of Jehovah; he stood in the presence of that king who had exchanged the adoration of the living God for that of a golden calf, and who, with the same uplifted and unhallowed hands that had created the altar, was now burning incense before it. Animated with confidence in the God by whom he was sent, and roused with indignation at the impious mockeries that were transacting before him, the holy man exclaimed: "O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high-places, that burn incense upon thee."

It is impossible to conceive any words more mortifying to the haughtiness, or more alarming to the fears of Jeroboam, and the misguided multitude that surrounded him; they were delivered, as it should seem, without faultering, and without equivocation; they were spoken in the very hearing of the man whose interests they chiefly affected; they denounced destruction to that very altar which was the instrument of his perfidy, and the bulwark of his usurpation. But the man of God did not trust merely to the peremptoriness of his assertion, and the sanctity of his character — for in the same day, he gave a sign,

saying, behold the altar shall be rent; and in the same day was that sign accomplished upon the person of the offending monarch, and in the sight of his astonished subjects, convinced it may be, but not converted at the warning voice of the man of God, terrified but not humbled at the just denunciation of vengeance that was impending over himself. Jeroboam puts forth his hand from the altar, and cries out to the servile minions of his rage—lay hold on him. At this moment his hand was dried up, and the altar was rent to pieces. Compunction and shame and terror seized the impious king; he now supplicates the man whom he before had threatened, and flies for shelter to the God whose sanctuary he had profaned.

And here mark well, that in all his dispensations, God, in the midst of wrath, remembereth mercy, and that the ministers of his will should, like their great master, be disposed to spare as well as to punish. The man of God sees the contrition of the king, and instantly forgets his own just resentments in the hopes of completing that reformation by kindness, which had already begun to work from rigour. The king himself was not shameless enough to pray that the altar might be restored; the man of God was not so weak or so wicked as to re-establish this monument of idolatry; but for the sufferings of the idolator himself, he was prevailed upon to offer up his prayers; and those prayers were immediately heard and accepted in heaven. When the king's hand was restored to him, and became as it was before, the heart that had been swollen up with pride,

and agitated with fury, was now overwhelmed by all the generous emotions of gratitude—come home with me, says he, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward; but the prophet, without spurning his favour, declined the acceptance of it. Unshaken in his purpose, and faithful to his commission, he firmly, but not disdainfully replies, "if thou wilt give me half thy house I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place; for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord." The king had too recent experience of the power of heaven to trifle with it by an attempt to corrupt his holy messenger; he was too deeply impressed with reverence for the ardent zeal, and the awful commission of the prophet, to expect or solicit any criminal compliances. His well meant offers had been, upon the most solid grounds of piety, refused by the prophet; and they were not repeated, you see, by the king from any mistaken motive of gratitude and respect. Thus far we look up with admiration to the fortitude of the prophet's temper, and to the consistency of his conduct; every word commands attention, and every action challenges applause. Let us however go on towards the melancholy sequel.

There dwelt, we find, an old prophet in Bethel, who when he had heard from his sons the words that were spoken before the king, anxiously inquired which way the man of God was gone, eagerly saddled his ass and went after him, and found him sitting under an oak. Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? To this courteous

and respectful address he answers, I am. Then says the old prophet—come home with me and eat bread. But the man of God still remembered the peremptory injunction of the deity,—still persisted in his honest purpose of obeying it. In the same spirit with which he before had forborne to avail himself of the gratitude of Jeroboam, he now declines the proffered hospitality of the prophet—I may not return with thee, says he, nor eat bread. To avert, however, from this refusal every offensive appearance of rude unthankfulness or affected singularity, he adds—for it was said to me by the word of the Lord—thou shalt eat no bread. Then the prophet of Bethel repeats and enforced his invitation; he undermines by artifice the resolution he could not overcome by opportunity, and he endeavours to crush every delicate and solicitous scruple of conscience in his guest, by opposing one divine command to another—a later command to a prior—a command communicated by an angel to one that was immediately delivered by inspiration. "I am a prophet also, as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying—bring him back with thee into thy house, that he may eat bread and drink water."

Here let us pause for a while, and consider some seeming difficulties, which, from the conciseness of the narrative, will naturally spring up in the mind of every attentive reader. For why, it may be asked was one of the prophets forbidden to refresh himself; and why was the other induced to offer refreshment, which, from the report of his sons and the subsequent

confession of the man of God, he knew to be unlawful? To neither of these questions the smallest answer is given by the writer of the book of Kings. All we have there is this—the one of them was conscious that he had received a command from heaven not to eat bread, nor to drink water; the other was well assured that this command had not been revoked by the being who had first given it; the one, therefore, had no right to accept or the other to offer. By accepting the one was guilty of gross disobedience, and the other for offering may be charged with the foulest treachery. The mandate of heaven, delivered originally to the man of God who came from Judah, and afterwards acknowledged by the prophet who dwelt at Bethel, was a sufficient foundation for the conviction, and a sufficient rule for the behaviour of both. To this plain position your own common sense will induce you to accede; and yet, without meaning to abandon it, I will endeavour to remove the embarassment, which you may perhaps feel, warning you at the same time, lest your curiosity should ensnare your faith; and informing you, that however you may refuse your assent to me, because my solution is unsatisfactory, you must still repose your trust in the word of God, to the vindication of which I am persuaded no solution at all is absolutely requisite.

The prophet then was not suffered to eat bread and to return by the way in which he came, for reasons, the one of which involved the trial of his virtue, and the other probably affected the security of his person. Let us examine these two articles. Had

refreshment been offered him before he pronounced his sentence against the altar, it might have come in a suspicious form, and in consequence of that weakness, to which from his subsequent behaviour he appears to have been liable, it might have totally diverted him from his purpose, or relaxed his steadiness and cooled his ardour in the execution of it. When tendered to him after the prophecy which he had denounced, and the miracles which he had performed, it no longer contained any insidious purpose; and yet surely it might have been accompanied with pernicious effects. The king indeed was, at the moment, strongly affected with sentiments of gratitude and piety; but the cause of idolatry, though disgraced, was not overcome. The altar of the golden calf was thrown down, but the edict for worshipping before it, was not revoked. The people were yet plunged deep in their sins; and in this situation of things it was indecorous for the worshipper of the true God to sit down with those who were accustomed to prostrate themselves at the feet of an idol, or to receive any mark of distinction, the offer of which proceeded from him who owed the power of conferring it to usurpation; and the acceptance of which might have been imputed to unworthy motives of sordid avarice and servile prevarication.

Now had the prophet gone back, upon any subsequent invitation, would not Jeroboam have been displeased at finding those offers accepted from a subject, which had been refused when proceeding from himself? Had the prophetic cha-

racter of the man of Bethel been assigned as a plea by the man of Judah, would not the king have been thrown into perplexity at the sudden revocation of the divine command? And might he not have been betrayed into some unworthy and impious sentiments towards the being, from whom it proceeded? Would he not have suspected either that the original direction itself was futile, or that the subsequent retractation of it was capricious on the part of the deity, and insidious on that of the prophet?

Be this as it may, the injunction itself was explicit, and there is some probability at least that it was founded upon this among other reasons. From a variety of passages in Greek and Roman writers we find that soothsayers and augurs were infamous for covetousness and rapacity; and in the Scriptures also we perceive that God frequently forbids his servants to receive any earthly gifts, in order, as it should seem, to protect them from the odium which the false prophets of the heathens had justly and notoriously incurred. Thus Balaam, wavering between the cravings of his avarice and the menaces of his conscience, was not permitted to take any recompence from Balak. Thus Elisha declined the acceptance of any present from Naaman, who had been cured of his leprosy; and thus, too, the man of God from Judah would not eat bread or drink water at the request of Jeroboam, whose hand he had restored. The act of restoring it was performed by the immediate appointment of Heaven, and the proper reward of him by whom it was per-

formed was to be found in the testimony of an applauding conscience.

In regard to the injunction, which directed the prophet to return by another way, it had an obvious tendency to preserve his person from the vindictive servants of Jeroboam. Pleased, doubtless, they were at the recovery of their master, but we should remember they had been provoked recently and vehemently at his humiliation. Now from the malignity of the human heart, which is much quicker in forgetting real favours than even imaginary wrongs; and from the readiness of abject dependants to execute without a pang what the tyrant without a blush could not have himself ordained, they might have conspired to destroy the prophet on his return; they might have applauded themselves for doing what they suspected Jeroboam of secretly wishing to be done; and splendid is the claim they might have set up, for suffering their zeal to exceed the expectation, and to anticipate the commands of a monarch for whose sake they had already deserted the religion of their forefathers, and dethroned the heir of their lawful prince. The minds of such men were prepared for the accumulation of enormity upon enormity. Unimportant in their eyes would have been the sanctity of the prophet, when contrasted with the dignity of a prince, in whose fate they felt a strong and immediate interest, not merely for the success of Jeroboam s enterprize, or from the eminence of his station. but from a cause yet more powerful than either—from his known and deep participation in the guilt of his subjects. To these

personal considerations in favour of their sovereign, we may add that the altar of their idol had been thrown down, and had not been raised up again; no atonement had been made for the insult thus offered to the worship which had lately been introduced among the revolted tribes, and to which they clung with the greater pertinacity, because it was recommended by novelty, because it was endeared to them by a sense of danger voluntarily incurred to establish it, and because it continued to derive its security from the same desperate measures and the same presumptuous spirit to which it owed its origin. In pursuing, therefore, a different route, the man of God might escape the blind and tumultuous rage of the people, and though his purpose was discovered by the two sons of the prophet, who perhaps watched his motion, we have no intimation given us that the inhabitants of Bethel at large were aware of it. The preceding reasons, I think, may be assigned without a glaring impropriety for the various and minute directions that were given to the prophet of Judah. Be it understood, however, that I propose them rather as conjectural than decisive; that I intend them to explain, not to justify the ways of God, and that, admitting other reasons, or even no circumstantial reasons at all to have existed in the mind of the prophet, I consider him as bound implicitly and unalterably to obey a command which he knew to be stamped by the seal of Heaven.

We will now examine the motives by which the old prophet might have been actuated. A suspicion has been started that Jeroboam had from political

motives employed the old man of Beth-el, in order to degrade the servant of the true God in the sight of his idolatrous subjects; but for this supposition I can find no presumptive evidence in the narrative, and surely the writer of the book of Kings, who cast some censure upon the deceit of the old prophet of Beth-el, would not have omitted the circumstance of his acting as an accomplice to so profligate a King in so execrable a purpose. He would not have passed over entirely in silence so sudden and daring a transition even in the mind of Jeroboam, from the warmest, and as it appears the sincerest gratitude, to the blackest and most inhuman treachery.

We have, therefore, no foundation for imputing the behaviour of the prophet to any collusion with the Prince. But as the motives that influenced him are not distinctly stated by the historian, we must have recourse to the general principles of human conduct—to those inward corruptions which lurk within the bosoms, and occasionally break out in the behaviour even of the best of men—to those deviations from rectitude into which, as we learn from sacred history, even the special and inspired ministers of Heaven were sometimes drawn aside. He dwelt at Beth-el, but does not seem to have caught the contagion of idolatry, which had polluted the other subjects of Jeroboam. He was also a man of God and a prophet, and hence we may in that very religious character itself discover some grounds for his most irreligious conduct. Is there in the breast of man a passion which rankles more foully, which

acts more powerfully and more incessantly, which betrays the best of men into wilder inconsistencies, or which instigates the worst into more atrocious enormities, than the passion of envy? The man of God who came from Judah held the same office which he himself professed to hold; he had been honoured with a commission for which the prophet of Beth-el might believe himself to have equal qualifications, and to which, in consequence of his residence there, he might suppose himself to be invested with a prior and a superior right. That commission had been executed with undaunted firmness, and with brilliant success. The person, to whom it was delegated, had fortified his claims to the dignity of his prophetic office by an act of mercy, which gave new energy to a preceding act of severity. His conduct was in all respects uniform and perfect; his reputation was unsullied by any one instance of timidity or precipitation; he was at once distinguished by the approbation of his heavenly employer and by the praise of an earthly king.

In this situation of affairs, if any root of bitterness can be supposed to have been lodged within the breast of the old man of Beth-el, who was more likely to become the object of it than the man of God that came down from Judah? Are not the best of men subject occasionally to sins which, in point of magnitude, bear no inconsiderable proportion to their habitual and most distinguishing excellencies? Is not our hatred pointed with the sharpest severity against those who excel in the arts to which we are indebted for our own cele

brity? Are those persons whom the deity has especially appointed to reveal his commands, always exempt from great and glaring sins? Was not the resolution of Balaam for a long time suspended between avarice and duty, and must we not at last ascribe his recovery from the dreadful struggle, not to human virtue, or to human wisdom, but to a miracle from Heaven? Did not ambition find its way to the hearts of the Apostles, and were they not, even in the presence of their meek and humble master, engaged in angry contentions, who among them should be the greatest in the kingdom of the Messiah? Was not Peter, after the warmest and most solemn protestations of adhering to the cause of his master, betrayed within the space of a few hours into the most abject pusillanimity; and did he not rush into the aggravated crimes of apostacy and perjury? When our own observations, and when the records of Scripture set before us so many examples of frailty, the man of God who dwelt at Beth-el may, without improbability, be supposed to act under the malignant influence of envy. The action itself was corrupt, and therefore the motive to it could not be honourable. The sacred historian has not indeed laid open all the foul and rancorous sentiments that were concealed within the bosom of the old prophet, but upon his crime he has set a strong and deep mark of reprobation. He stops short to point out explicitly what the narrative itself would have proved most abundantly.

Now it is proper for me to observe, that the sacred writers, however largely and warmly they may

expatiate upon the good qualities of men, usually relate their bad actions without endeavouring to excite our horror by elaborate description and accumulated reproaches; but upon the present occasion we have an exception to the general rule, where the sacred writer, for a moment, gives vent to the emotions of a deserved and poignant indignation. These are his words—the old man of Beth-el said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. The historian adds, but he lied unto him.

Here the limits assigned to discourses of this kind compel me to close, for the present, my remarks upon the introductory part of the narrative, and reserve the argumentative and more interesting consideration of the sequel for a future opportunity. Weighty, be assured, are the reasons, which induce me to be thus minute in exploring the collateral and subordinate parts of this singular and most striking event. For well do I know, that from the blindness of our judgments, and from the perverseness of our will, we are often tempted to seek a shelter in particular and circumstantial difficulties, so as to weaken the conviction which a broad and general statement of facts is calculated to impress. I know that it is common for us to treat those arguments as very pertinent and important while they are not answered, which, after they have been answered even to the confutation of reluctant and prejudiced hearers, we affect to consider as immaterial. I know, also, that

in forming our opinions upon the awful, and in some degree incomprehensible, dispensations of the Almighty, we give an undue and artificial force to every slight and plausible objection; we studiously resist the humble and sober conclusions of true philosophy; and we yield a languid and unwilling assent to the express authority of Revelation itself.

To guard you, therefore, from the guilt and danger of such self-delusion, I have endeavoured to anticipate almost every scruple which captiousness can dictate—to answer every enquiry which even curiosity could propose; and by these means to plant your very prejudices, if prejudiced you will be, on the side of virtue, and to leave the operations of your reason unencumbered by the perverse suggestions of your imaginations. The observations already made are, I trust, not in themselves altogether uninstructive; but they acquire a greater importance, as being preparatory to the dreadful revolution which is hereafter to be considered in the conduct, and, alas! in the fate, of the man of God. Hitherto, indeed, he has acted up to the full spirit of the command that had been given him. He has eaten no bread, he has drunk no water, and he was on his return by another way from that in which he came. This steadiness of conduct, while it entitles him to our praise, encourages us also to expect that his vigilance and his intrepidity would have risen superior to every succeeding trial that might await him. But these expectations, however pleasing, will ultimately prove fallacious. In the

conclusion of his history, we shall see that general rectitude of intention does not secure us from the assaults of sudden temptation. We shall have occasion to lament, that, in the very moment when virtue is ascending to her highest triumphs, she may be staggered into irresolution, surprized into guilt, and overwhelmed with infamy and ruin. In a word, we have before us the stubborn evidence of facts to assist us in learning a lesson most humiliating to our pride, but most necessary to our innocence. I mean, that he who, conscious of his past safety, supposes himself to stand, yet has need, nay, in consequence of that very consciousness, has more urgent need, to be cautious lest he hereafter fall, and by falling incur a condemnation far heavier than he has hitherto escaped.

SERMON II.

1 KINGS, xiii. 22.

PHILOSOPHY endeavours to promote the improvement of mankind either by abstruse investigations or popular precepts, which, however they may enlighten and convince the understanding, seldom reach the heart. Religion, on the contrary, while it connects throughout practice with theory, and interweaves the history of moral agents with their duties, pursues a better path. It illustrates general rules by particular instances; it employs the activity of our imagination, and the severity of our judgment, on the characters of men who are represented as bearing a distinguished part on the great and stupendous theatre of the religious world; it gives our passions a warm and immediate interest in their fate, and fixes upon our conscience the most salutary impressions from their various examples. But from the historical form in which the Scriptures are drawn up, and from the singular situation in which men were appointed to act, while the usual order of Providence was occasionally suspended, there is room for the most circumspect inquiry, and for the most accurate discrimination, both when we decide upon the measures

pursued by Almighty God, and when we apply to the regulation of our own conduct the actions of his creatures. That circumspection, and that accuracy, have not been sufficiently employed on the interesting, and in some parts, I confess, the very perplexing event recorded in the chapter of my text.

Thus, in many of the objections that have been made to the sufferings of the prophet, who was commanded to eat no bread and to brink no water in the city of Beth-el, little attention seems to have been paid to the peculiar structure of the Jewish government, to the pecular genius of the Jewish religion, and to the peculiar duties which, in consequence of them, were incumbent upon those who exercised the prophetic office. Under that government, and under that religion, every act of disobedience to the will of God, communicated by preternatural revelation, must have been most injurious to the cause which such kinds of revelation were frequently and professedly employed to support. As therefore eminent rewards were bestowed upon those who discharged their duty, uncommon severities were, by parity of reason, inflicted upon those who transgressed it. The provision that is made by human laws is indeed general, and therefore imperfect; for, through the existence or the absence of circumstantial aggravation, there often will be a wide disproportion between offences and penalties. Nay in the general course of our conduct, as we are responsible to Almighty God, it is not consistent with any ideas we can form of a proba-

tionary scheme of government, that trangressions should instantly and invariably be overtaken by that punishment which is more properly reserved to a period of future and more exact retribution. But, in extraordinary cases, what is defective in human laws may be supplied, and what is improper, according to the general condition of our moral agency, may be introduced. The sins of men whom the Deity vouchsafes to invest with the highest dignity, and to direct by the most powerful aids, are evidently of a deeper dye. If, therefore, they be visited by immediate and adequate severities of judgment from Almighty God, we have no right to charge upon those severities either any infringement of the general rules of equity, or any inconsistence with the wisdom of that plan by which the rigours of Divine justice are suspended, while the objects of it continue in a state of moral trial and discipline.

Now if you connect these observations on the extraordinary providence of God with the statement I in a former discourse laid before you, of the difficulties which must attend our researches even into his ordinary dispensations, you will find that our reason is incapable of comprehending the whole scheme which God is pursuing in either of them; that where the ends are unknown we are incapable of deciding positively upon the means; and that the greatest caution should be used in applying to the one even the most correct principles which are deduced from our very imperfect views of the other.

In my former discourse, you may recollect that I

gave you some account of the public events which had preceded the commission of the Prophet, who went down from Judah to Beth-el; that I examined the character of Jeroboam, whose hand was withered and restored; that I set before you the firmness of the prophet in refusing to eat bread; that I assigned some conjectural reasons for the command which was given him not to eat it; and that I stated the motives which probably influenced the man of God at Beth-el, who persuaded him to violate that command. I shall now resume the narrative, in order to consider the effects of this persuasion, to point out the guilt of the man of Judah in yielding to it, and to vindicate the punishment which he incurred. My remarks have hitherto been of the explanatory kind; but, in examining the sequel of the story, we shall now and then have occasion for a form of discussion more closely argumentative. I shall conclude with some important observations, which that case may suggest to us for the general regulation of our enquiries and our conduct upon the awful and momentous subject of religion. Let us proceed to resume the narrative.

So far as the behaviour of the prophet has hitherto fallen under our notice, he had done nothing either to weaken our respect or to provoke our disapprobation. He had borne an open and indignant testimony against the usurpation of Jeroboam, and the idolatry of his associates: but the fatal moment was now arrived, in which his caution and his courage at once forsook him. For when he hears that an angel of the Lord had revoked the

prohibition, he makes no farther delay, he enters into no farther enquiry, but hastily and confidently transgresses that injunction to which he had before adhered with the strictest fidelity. The menaces of Jeroboam had not disheartened him; even the courteousness of the old prophet had not prevailed upon him; but at the first mention of a message from Heaven, all his scruples vanished without hesitation, he went back with the prophet, and without fear he proceeded to eat bread and to drink water. How overwhelming then must have been his surprise—how agonizing his terrors, when under the roof of a protector and a prophet he was made acquainted with his guilt—when, to complete his misery, the corruptor started up in the form of an accuser—when, in the solemn tone, and with the commanding aspect, of one who was at this crisis really inspired, the man of Beth-el laid bare to him the baseness of his disobedience, and announced to him the just and approaching wrath of the Almighty: "Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drank water in the place of which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come into the sepulchre of thy fathers."

The accusation could not be expressed in terms of more marked energy, or of more pointed severity. By the sentence which accompanied it, he is not only doomed by implication to a premature and violent death, but he is excluded from the privilege

of having his body consigned to the same grave with those who were nearest and dearest to him—a privilege upon which the nations of antiquity appear to have set the highest value, and the forfeiture of which was more afflictive to men of tender sensibility and exalted spirits than the loss even of life itself. But here, perhaps, your pity will take the alarm, and warp the operations of your sober reason. You will suspect an excess of rigour in the sentence which was pronounced in the name of God himself; you will attempt to extenuate, at least, what cannot be totally justified; and in these words, or such as these, you will offer a plausible and a tender plea in behalf of the unhappy offender. Had he not, up to this moment, resisted the joint solicitations of the king and of the prophet? Did he yield before he was informed that the permission to eat proceeded from the same quarter with the interdict? Must he not naturally have conceived very favourable sentiments towards the old prophet, who, without any professed friendship, or previous acquaintance, had, from motives, as they seemed, of the most disinterested kind, pursued him on his return, and addressed him with all the captivating simplicity and all the melting ardour of hospitality and benevolence? Was there any one symptom of deceit in the behaviour of the man of God who dwelt at Beth-el? Or could any probable motive be assigned upon the spot for an attempt to deceive? Under such circumstances, surely the soundest judgment might have been misguided, and the stoutest resolution have been overborne. Nay,

from the appearance of things, compliance was not only harmless, but meritorious; it might be vindicated, not by a bare permission on the part of the Deity, but by the most explicit injunction. If, however, the conduct of the man of Judah is to be condemned, yet surely it is to be considered rather as a frailty which moves our pity, than as a crime which authorizes our indignation. If punishment was to be inflicted, it ought, you will say, to have fallen far more heavily upon the deceiver than upon the deceived.

To this plea I will now make my reply; and, while I make it, let me entreat you to suspend for a moment the hasty dictates of your humanity, and to listen to the surer and more salutary suggestions of your reason. Is it not probable that, oppressed with fatigue, and tormented with hunger, the man of God secretly wished for refreshment? And are we not conscious, from our own repeated and deplorable experience, that the slightest reason upon the side of inclination will predominate over the strongest when opposed to it. True, say ye; and and could there be a stronger than the command of Heaven? No, surely: but such a command was in reality not issued; and if the prophet had exercised that caution and firmness which his character and situation required, he might have discovered the imposture, and have avoided the guilt into which he was betrayed by it. He knew, by the most infallible proofs—he felt the strongest assurances, that the prohibition to eat did actually proceed from the Deity; by the known guidance and under the

immediate inspiration of that Deity, he had pronounced a prophecy, which in part he had seen fulfilled, and he was under the clearest conviction that what remained would also be accomplished; he had performed two miracles, when the hand of Jeroboam was withered, and when it was restored; he had seen the effects of this wonderful Divine agency, in humbling the pride and taming the ferocity of a most unprincipled usurper; he was conscious that every word which himself had uttered, and every action which himself had performed, were both warranted by the authority and sanctified by the approbation of the Omniscient and the Almighty; he was conscious that at this very moment he was discharging a commission, part of which was unfinished, and that part was, he knew, appointed by the same power which had most exactly and most illustriously performed the rest. He could not but feel the triumphs of an applauding conscience for what he had already done, and he had received the most explicit and the most authoritative directions respecting that which he was hereafter to do.

In opposition to all these considerations, which must have rushed fast upon men of the weakest judgment, and which upon a person who had given such repeated and striking instances as he did of vigilance and firmness, might have been expected to operate most strongly and even irresistibly—what had he to urge? Why the bare words of a man, whom before probably he had never seen, words supported by no evidences of prophecy or miracles, both of which were at hand in the

freshest and most glowing colours to authorize the prohibition—words, which the prophet who uttered them did not pretend to have received from direct personal inspiration, but from an angel into whose commission he does not profess to have inquired—words which, from the very circumstance of the contradiction to a previous and positive command, should have filled him with doubt and amazement —words to which, in common prudence and common sense, he ought to have turned a deaf ear till the man who spoke them had produced the most unequivocal and the most luminous testimony of of his credentials from Heaven, when in the name of God he called upon a man of God, who was speaking and acting by a direct commission from God, to perform the very deed which God himself had peremptorily interdicted. Nothing less than this could have authorized his conduct, and nothing less even for one moment should have suspended his conviction or even have engaged his attention. Had the prophet of Judah demanded such evidence, he would have acted safely and virtuously; by neglecting to demand it, he plunged into sin and into perdition; he violated a command, of the existence and the importance of which he could not doubt; he cancelled by one transgression the merits of his former obedience; the warning was given him; he did not escape from the stumbling block that lay before him, but, in the emphatical language of Ezekiel, died in his sins, and all the righteousness which he had done was no more remembered.

From me you have heard the strong proofs which

a man in his circumstances ought to have required; and from the sacred historian you may learn the very weak, and very suspicious proofs to which he sacrificed his innocence and his peace. He at once believed the man of God who came from Beth-el, though the interdict of the Almighty was not repealed by any direct communication of the Divine will to his own mind — though prophecies recently accomplished, and miracles recently performed, were vivid in his memory—though the language he heard from the prophet was diametrically opposite to the voice he had heard from God, yet he did not stay to call for any one proof—to investigate any one reason, that might reconcile these glaring inconsistencies; he went back readily, and, as it should seem, eagerly; he eat bread, and drank water, without solicitude lest he should be deceived, and without an effort to detect the deceiver.

Do you ask me now, whether the prophet was informed of the reason for which the injunction was given? The silence of the Scriptures does not enable me to answer this question positively; but it does authorize me, even upon your own principles, to put another question in my turn. Was he acquainted, or did he endeavour to become acquainted, with the reason for which it was revoked? If one reason was given for the injunction, another, equally indubitable, and equally cogent, ought to have been demanded for the revocation. Nay, if no reason had been assigned for the injunction, some reason might have been asked for the revocation; for could the prophet naturally expect that, without any appa-

rent change of circumstances, a command so recently imposed, so solemnly expressed, should be suddenly superseded? I will go further, and maintain that, even in the prophet's own view of the case, he was bound to abstain from food, whether the reason of that abstinence was or was not communicated to him? If it was communicated to him, no right of dispensing with the Divine command can be supposed to arise from his eventual disapprobation of that reason. If it was not communicated, the obligation to obey that command remained precisely the same; for it rested, according to the prophet's own plain confession, and his own correspondent practice, upon the sacred authority of God himself, and upon the clear conviction of the prophet that the command actually proceeded from God. In whatsoever point of view, then, you consider his conduct, it is utterly indefensible. His knowledge of the reason could not be the ground of his obedience; his ignorance of the reason could not be a plea for his disobedience. The command itself was intelligible, and therefore could not be misrepresented; it was peremptory, and therefore ought not to have been transgressed.

But you will say, was not the direction to abstain from bread unimportant in itself, or at least unworthy of being followed up by so tremendous a train of consequences? Surely, my brethren, you will not be in haste to suppose, that any injunction issued from the deity can be really trivial, or can, even for a moment, appear to be such, in the mind of him to whom it was conveyed, not by the usual

channels of information, but by the medium of inspiration. If the language were intelligible, if the conditions were practicable, would you not acquiesce in every appearance, however unfavourable—would you not suspect every contrary appearance, however specious—and would you not suppose the same Deity, who had already chosen the end, most able to proportion and to regulate the means? Such ought to be your general way of arguing, on the supposition that the reason of any command were unknown to you.

But let us apply this reasoning to the particular case of the prophet, assuming as one foundation of the prohibition to eat bread, the suspicion of avarice, to which, as I told you lately, the prophetic character was exposed. The king, you see, desired the prophet to return, not only in order to take refreshment, but to receive a reward. The prophet answers, not simply that he wants no bread, but that he would not be prevailed upon to go back even by the offer of half the king's house. The spirit of the prohibition excluded the greatest reward; the letter of it was confined to the smallest: and surely, as on the one hand it is probable that he who accepts the smallest would not decline the greatest, so, on the other, his virtue must derive a greater security from the severity of the interdict, which forbad him to yield even to the first and slightest degree of temptation. Thus may we account for the strictness of the command, and in that mode of interpretation we have the concurrence of the prophet himself. But, further, it will be allowed

me, I suppose, that local and temporary circumstances considerably affect both the motives and consequences of our behaviour, the qualities of action, and also the magnitude of the consequences which flow from them; and that in many cases they determine the responsibility of moral agents, and even constitute the very essence of some actions, to which, in the absence of these circumstances, no rules of morality could be with propriety applied.

Now, in considering the injunction given to the prophet, attention should be paid to the manners of eastern countries, where to eat bread and drink water frequently implied something more than a mere compliance with the rules of hospitality, and led to the observance of religious ceremonies, which to partake was in some measure to approve. Among the Greeks also, we find an association between the acts of eating together and sacrificing together so very close and so very familiar, that it passed into a proverb. In accepting, therefore, the offer of Jeroboam, the prophet might have appeared, in the estimation of idolators, to give some sort of countenance to idolatry itself. But in order to exclude every thing of this indecorous aspect and dangerous tendency in his deportment, the prophet was forbidden to share in any convivial enjoyments with those persons whom he could not without impiety join in their religious worship.

True, will you say, we withdraw the first part of the objection, and acknowledge that the command was very properly designed to prevent the prophet from eating with idolators; but did his going back to eat

with a prophet amount to a violation of that command? From this question a consequence will arise, which is little expected by those who urge it, and cannot be easily answered by them. For, if the question itself be pertinent, it follows that your exactness and sagacity in the interpretation of the Divine prohibition far exceeded the sagacity and exactness of both the prophets themselves, who were most deeply interested. The prophet from Judah, when he heard the second invitation, pleaded the same original interdict, in the same precise words, and did not attempt to make any distinction between going back to eat with Jeroboam, and to eat with the man of God. The prophet of Beth-el does not set up the distinction to enforce his own request, but has recourse to a pretended revelation. If then there was really the difference contended for, the scruples of the one prophet, and the falsehood of the other, were altogether unnecessary. If there was no difference, because none is stated in the command itself, and of course the prophet considered himself bound to eat no bread whatsoever at Beth-el, he, by eating it, deservedly incurred the penalty annexed to his disobedience.

Now, from these circumstances, and others that may be quite unknown to us, the disobedience of the prophet of Judah was highly degrading to the dignity of the prophetic character, and highly dishonourable to the religion of the one true God, in the sight of the ten apostate and idolatrous tribes. At all events, the terms on which the command were expressed, were unambiguous, whatever might

be the reasons on which it was founded, and whether those reasons were concealed from the prophet or imparted to him. It was the voice of God himself. It was the voice of God speaking to a man of God, in the cause of God, and the spirit which presumed to trifle with that voice and that cause, whether directly or indirectly—the spirit which strove to evade what it shuddered to violate openly—the spirit which snatched the first opportunity of escaping an unwelcome service, would have been a spirit of rashness and insincerity in any circumstances; but in those of the prophet it deserves a severer appellation. If, indeed, we take upon ourselves to separate in any moral duty, or in any religious injunction, what we think frivolous from what we know to be indispensible — if, where it is easy to obey, we are therefore prone to disobey, and venture to eat bread even where we should not venture to take a greater reward — if, disregarding the authority of the lawgiver, we hold sternly back our compliance till we are acquainted with all the reasons and all the uses of the law itself — if we would steal away from the sanctions of general rules, and hastily assume, that we are ourselves acting in circumstances that constitute a particular exception — if we measure the obligatory force of a Divine command by the consequences, which, according to our own contracted views, may or may not in single instances attend the transgression of it, we act a most unbecoming and a most dangerous part.

Through the fascinating blindness of self-love, such excuses may satisfy ourselves to ourselves.

With a fair and false shew of candour we may bring forward such excuses in behalf of the prophet of Judah. But such excuses are not so lightly accepted before God, who weigheth our deeds in a balance, who trieth the very heart and reins, and who seeth our inmost thoughts afar off. To him every latent and apparent motive, every adventitious and aggravating circumstance, every near and every remote effect of our actions must be fully known; and in reference to these motives, circumstances, and effects collectively, our moral governor directs his commands and proportions his judgments.

After these endeavours to satisfy your inquisitiveness, to check your rashness, to soothe your uneasiness, I will now put the case home to that sympathy to which the ultimate appeal must always lie in moral discussions. Had you been told by a prophet that an angel from God authorized you to eat bread, might you not eat it? Yes, certainly; if no previous circumstances had existed, or none similar to those which existed here. But what are they? An indisputable and peremptory revelation of God's will, immediately and supernaturally conveyed into the mind of the prophet, that he should not eat—a prediction delivered, and in part accomplished—two miracles performed openly on the person of Jeroboam—in this state of things, which I minutely explained in this and a former discourse, I say in this state of things, where marks of an extraordinary interposition crowd fast upon your minds, would you not have been staggered at the bare mention of a contrary revelation? would you not have inquired

most scrupulously into the evidence of the permission to eat, and the motives and character and credentials of him who announced it? But the prophet from Judah was not staggered; he did not inquire; he believed without a pause; he consented without a struggle; he disobeyed and he perished.

I have no pleasure, believe me, my hearers, in trampling upon the ashes of the dead, or in dragging to light the frailties of the wise and good. But I am most happy in shewing you that the words and works of God can, in any one disputed instance, be clearly and entirely vindicated. I am most anxious to prevent you from indulging pity at the expence of justice and piety. I am most confident in saying, that no argument can be drawn against the truth of this history from any circumstances in it which really clash with the holiness of God. I have defended the scriptures, in opposition perhaps to the honest, but mistaken prejudices even of those by whom those scriptures are believed and reverenced. I have placed before you a most striking example of the sin and misery to which the best of men are liable. I permit you to commisserate the misfortunes of the prophet. I forbid you to explain away his offence. I exhort you to take heed unto your own ways from the serious remembrance of both.

But whatever defence we may be disposed ourselves to allege, whether from the perverseness of our judgment, or even from the benevolence of our tempers, the man of God does not appear either to have doubted the reality of his own guilt, or to have

arraigned the equity of his sentence. He did not resort to the clamorous language of accusation upon his accuser and betrayer. He did not found any excuse upon his own crime compared with that of the old prophet who dwelt at Beth-el. In silence and in sorrow he began to return home; and while he was returning he was met by a lion and slain. Here the narrative closes in respect to the fate of the prophet from Judah; and here too ought our condemnation to be at an end. Of the destiny reserved for him in a future life we have no account; but as his sufferings on this side of the grave were so exemplary, we are permitted to hope that the justice of the deity was satisfied.

But I must now proceed to contend with a misconception which too generally pervades our feelings, and our reasonings upon this subject; I say, then, that no extenuation of the prophet's misconduct can be fairly deduced from any comparison of his crime with that of the prophet who dwelt at Beth-el; and I further say that it is generally, but not universally true, that the turpitude of the tempter is greater than the turpitude of him who is tempted. The person tempted may distinctly perceive and strongly feel many reasons for obedience, which he who would tempt him feels not, knows not, and therefore cannot attempt to counteract. Accidental or personal advantages, more access to information, more conscious dignity of character, more natural or acquired vigour of understanding may be on the side of the one, and to such a degree too that they ought to place him beyond the reach of any wile, however crafty, and any

solicitation however importunate, that may be employed by the other. This assertion is not vague or paradoxical, and why? The importance of a duty may be so apparent, the obligation to it so cogent, and the discharge of it so difficult, that failure is altogether inexcusable. But inattention and irresolution in such parts of our trial border upon infatuation. They imply a secret unwillingness to do our duty, or a secret carelessness whether it be done properly, and under either of these suppositions that action, which in the eye of men is but a momentary weakness, may in reality be, and in the eye of God appear to be, an impious mockery.

These considerations, be assured, are not trifling or fallacious, and they are evidently most applicable to the case of the prophet. I think it, however, a wretched waste of time to enquire which of the prophets was most criminal; and I confess myself unfurnished with materials to determine the question as such a question should be determined, clearly upon the strength of proof, and consistently with the reverence which is due to an omniscient and all-righteous God. But convinced I am, that, if we could even demonstrate the sin of the prophet of Beth-el to be upon the whole greater, we should still be compelled to acknowledge that the sin of the prophet of Judah, when measured by the circumstances of his character and his commission, was very great. No vague and declamatory invective against perfidy—no smooth and shewy pleas for credulity and inconstancy—no abstruse and theoretical researches into the comparative malignity of

their principles—no precarious and intricate calculations of the magnitude of their consequences, which after all must vary indefinitely, in various circumstances of time and place, and manners and religion—none, I say, of these easy and trite and popular topics can be of the least use in determining so peculiar and complex a question as that before us. It may be allowable for you to stigmatize the action of one prophet with the ignominous appellation of treachery, but upon me it is not incumbent to affix any term of specific accusation to the behaviour of the other. The general charge of disobedience to the will of God is sufficient to stamp his demerit; and, whatever be your hesitation about the choice of words, you must be unqualified for any sound judgment on facts, if you deny that disobedience, in this case, was accompanied by many particular and high aggravations.

If indeed you were as ready to trace back the causes of your first impressions as to follow them implicitly in a wild career of error and perhaps impiety—if you felt a steady purpose to preserve impartiality by balancing probable aggravations against ideal palliatives—if, instead of choosing some scattered part, you viewed it in connexion with the whole—or, to address you in a strain of bolder expostulation, if, daring to start a doubt on the divine justice, you weighed again and again the apparent or possible force of those circumstances which did not escape the divine wisdom, and which incurred the divine displeasure—then only should I think you authorized to pronounce in this delicate and arduous case, and then

too, I am confident you would either approve of the sentence from the firmest conviction, or at least acquiesce in it with silent admiration.

Such are my reasons for insisting on the real criminality of both prophets, and for dissuading you from fruitless and delusive inquiries which of them was in his conduct the most criminal. In their subsequent conditions, so far as they are recorded by the scriptures, there is an inequality. But the exemption of the old man of Beth-el from temporal punishment, furnishes no proof of his final security from a heavier punishment; nor does it in the smallest degree impeach the justice of that death to which the man of God was condemned. Far be it from me to throw the slightest gloss over an action which my own heart, and the heart of every good man, must abhor. But there is reason to fear lest the first violent emotions of our indignation should rather misguide us in our ultimate judgment on the whole cause. The sacred historian admits the claim of the offender to be considered as a man of God. We may hope, therefore, that the general tenor of his life was irreproachable, and as to his behaviour in this particular instance, we may resolve it into those sudden and almost inexplicable impulses, by which the most cautious are sometimes surprised into violence, the mildest into asperity, and the most serious even into impiety.

We may find a little room even for the exercise of that candour which, while it deplores the inattention and credulity of one prophet, may also deplore in another the dismal effect of envy—a pas-

sion, surely, to which the most enlightened of the human race are very subject, and to the assaults of which experience tells us the most virtuous are not always superior. We may even rejoice that he shewed some signs of contrition, and made some efforts of compensation, when, mourning over the carcase, which the lion had spared, he exclaimed, in the sharp agony of his soul, Alas! my brother!—when he directed that carcase to be honoured with the rites of burial, and when he commanded his son to lay his own bones beside the bones of a fellow-prophet, whom his pretences to piety had deceived—of that guest whom his very offers of kindness had destroyed. Be it observed, too, that the very man who in the words of my text had arraigned the disobedience of the prophet from Judah, yet bore witness to the truth of the predictions he had delivered, and even assigned it as a reason for the tribute of respect which he paid to the dead—"When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre where the man of God is buried; for the saying, which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the city of Samaria, shall surely come to pass." The detestation of idolatry, the love of truth, the reverence done to him that spoke it, were not extinguished in the breast of the prophet of Beth-el,—they were not extinguished by his knowledge of that offence which he had before condemned, or by causes yet more powerful—the consciousness he had of his own share in stimulating the offender, and by the deep envenomed hatred which usually rankles

in the human heart against those whom we have grossly injured.

I shall grapple only with one objection more. Is there not some difficulty in conceiving how one prophet should be suffered to be the instrument of deceiving another, and should be reserved, though labouring, it may be, under an equal load of guilt, to later punishment? A difficulty there is, but not of such a kind as to be peculiar to this history. In this mixed and imperfect state of discipline God, we know, permits men eminently virtuous to be ensnared by others who are less worthy than they, and even by those who are most notoriously wicked. We also know that the one are suddenly overtaken by the consequences of their offences, while the other *seems* at least to escape, and are supposed to live without disaster, and to die without dismay. Experience shews all this in the ordinary course of God's providence, and analogy would lead us to expect something similar to it even in extraordinary dispensations. In truth, the moral fitness of all such appointments is in both cases exactly the same, and in both we must have recourse to a future state of retribution. At the same time it is proper for me to observe, that no vindication of our misconduct can arise, either from the characters of those by whom we are seduced into evil, or by any difference in the judicial consequences of seduction upon those who employ it and those who yield to it.

The profligacy of one man's behaviour ought, you say, to put us upon our guard; the authority of another man's reputation, I say, ought not to throw us off

that guard, when we are summoned to the discharge of a very arduous duty, and have a very high interest at stake. For if the general rectitude of men be pleaded as an excuse for those whom they betray, it by a very little management will be converted into a plea for the betrayer himself. But the plain fact is this—we are always to prefer the known will of God to any plausible persuasions of our fellow-creatures, that may induce us to swerve from it.

As to any arguments drawn from the inequality of punishment, no stress at all is to be laid upon them, by which we can determine where lies the greater and where the less degree of guilt. Were those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, sinners, think ye, above all other men? No, surely; yet we allow that they were so far sinners as to have been justly destroyed. But instead of inquiring whether the same destruction might not have fallen upon other and greater sinners *as* justly, we shall be more profitably and more becomingly employed in attending to that warning voice which instructs us to beware lest we also should perish. The application of our Lord's remark to the recorded suffering of one prophet and the supposed escape of the other, is too obvious to require any farther illustration. And if you would blunt the force of the application by saying that in the case of the two prophets there was a connexion of guilt, and therefore ought to have been a connexion in their punishment; whereas they who perished at Siloam were not the associates of the greater sinners to whose impunity our Lord alludes—my answer is,

that this distinction does not affect the honour of God; for if consistency must be supposed to pervade the whole of his moral government, it is incumbent upon his justice to punish every unrepented offence sooner or later, while it rests with his wisdom to determine how soon and how late that punishment shall be inflicted, and whether any room or none shall be left for repentance. But whatever difficulties may now and then press upon you when you reflect on the comparative fates of the two prophets, your feelings and your reason will induce you thus to think of their conduct. Both offended, and both deserved punishment. The disobedience of the one must not be palliated. The treachery of the other must be condemned and abhorred. Even the difference of the treatment they experienced, as it is stated in the scriptures, may be of some use to us; for against the mischievous consequences we are apt to draw from the temporary impunity of the wicked, there cannot be a more effectual preservative than the consideration of the exemplary punishment sometimes inflicted upon the righteous.

From the foregoing explanation I shall draw some directions that may be useful to us, both in our speculations and in our practice upon the momentous topics of religion.

Whether we direct our inquiries to the course of God's providence, or to the revelations of his will, we are surrounded by difficulties which the short line of the human understanding cannot fathom. But if sound philosophy teaches us to affirm of the

one, "that all seeming discord is harmony not understood," a rational faith will convince us concerning the other, that what appears most improbable must be yet true—that the religion of our Redeemer is founded upon a rock—that no part of it is futile or delusive, and that though heaven and earth be dissolved, not the least of his words shall pass away. Some facts are, indeed recorded which we cannot in all respects reconcile to our preconceived opinions upon the moral government of the Universe; many mysterious doctrines are announced to us, which baffle the attempts of the most ingenious and the most learned to explain them—many practical precepts are laid down, the performance of which may be irksome to flesh and blood; but if the scriptures be once admitted as of divine original, every scruple must from that instant be subdued, and every objection must be stifled.

The founder of Christianity tells us plainly and concisely what we are to do, and what we are to avoid. He sets before us speculative and practical propositions, often without condescending to notice their difficulties, and always, I had nearly said, without attempting to solve them. In challenging our assent to the one, and our compliance with the other, he appeals, indeed, to our understandings, but with our prepossessions he does not struggle. He addresses us not with the eloquence of a declaimer, or with the subtlety of a logician; but in the simple and authoritative language of a divine teacher. This, for example, is the doctrine which our Father who is in heaven has revealed. That again is the

commandment which the Lord thy God has commanded thee. In the same manner do the writers both of the Old and New Testament relate as eye-witnesses, events, for which they do not pretend to account as philosophers; and indeed whensoever a preternatural agency is once admitted upon the strength of testimony, where is, I say, not the necessity, but even the propriety of having recourse to causes purely and confessedly within the ordinary course of nature for the explication of effects, to which, both in our own conceptions and in the supposed cases, they are inadequate, and therefore I contend inapplicable. Upon the same principles we cannot reason directly from common situations to the greater or less importance of any command that is given to those, who were employed as the prophet of Judah was, where the voice of God distinctly commanded him, where the hand of God visibly acted with him, where the moral as well as physical circumstances of his situation and character, and consequently where his sense of duty and obligation to perform it were altogether uncommon. There is no mystery surely, but common sense, in saying that peculiar cases are to be interpreted by peculiar laws, that extraordinary commissions require extraordinary exertions, that they imply, and in regard to the prophet, were accompanied by extraordinary aids, and that the neglect of those aids justly subjects the offender to an extraordinary degree of punishment.

Mistake me not. Far be it from me to cramp the exercise of your reason; for my aim only is to point

out the particular principles which are to direct you in exercising it properly and consistently. Upon points of fact, you are like the Beræans, to examine whether these things be so. Upon points of doctrine you are not only allowed, but encouraged to give an account of the hope that is in you. And when you consider that your dearest interests are staked upon exact apprehensions of your duty, the importance of the question, while it restrains your rashness, should also stimulate your industry. At the same time, however, that you are putting forth your collected strength to discover what is truth, you should bear in mind the weakness that may expose you to error in forming your faith. You should ever be on the watch against the fallibility of your judgments, the waywardness of your prejudices, the impertinence of your curiosity, and the delusions of your pride; you should carefully abstain from every wish to lower the sense of scriptural doctrines to the standard of your very limited and very deceitful reason; you should hear without credulity, and even repel with firmness, the specious representations of others, who, striving to be wise beyond what is written, would substitute their own crude opinions and unauthorized conjectures for the infallible oracles of the living God.

Such is the cautious and humble conduct which becomes us in matters of speculation; and surely upon subjects of practice we have yet greater reason to be on our guard against the turbulence of our passions, and the stubbornness of our habits, the delusive influence of our secular inte-

rests, and the dangerous refinements of a most thoughtless and most degenerate world. The commands of God are too peremptory to be resisted, too pure to be corrupted, and too clear to be explained away. Hence, if false prophets should arise, and according to our Saviour's predictions shew signs and wonders, they could not absolve you from the belief of any one proposition the Gospel contain, or from the discharge of any one duty it prescribes. Though a man of God should tell you that an angel requires you to go back with him, you must not without examining his pretensions presume to taste one drop of water or one morsel of bread, in the place of which you know that the Lord has commanded ye shall eat no bread and drink no water. You must not desert a plain, though perhaps an irksome, duty, because a subsequent injunction, the authority of which is disputable, may be more agreeable to your wishes, and in reference to the ordinary rules of action more intelligible to your reason. Has God affirmed? you must assent without wavering. Has he commanded? you must without hesitation obey. For the authority of the lawgiver is in all such cases the clearest vindication of the law, as well as the sole direction for him upon whom it is imposed.

Straight indeed and plain are the paths of truth and virtue; but if we turn aside to the right hand or to the left, we have no security for being able to go back to the innocence we have abandoned. We shall reluctantly yield to an obligation, the force of which we have once endeavoured to elude. In our

researches we shall be entangled in the mazes of uncertainty, and in our conduct we shall soon be plunged in the pit-falls of temptation. He that multiplies the artificial difficulties of securing his salvation, deservedly forfeits all hope of pardon for not vanquishing those which are real and unavoidable. For a time, indeed, a very short time, the arts of sophistry may be employed in extracting self-approbation from self-deceit—in perverting industriously the operations of our reason, and hushing the secret and unwelcome remonstrances of our consciences. Those arts may induce us to plant one supposed obligation against another which is real and acknowledged, and to plead a permission announced by an angel, for doing that which the immediate voice of God had before forbidden us to do. They may embolden us to seize some hasty and hollow apology for our obstinacy, it may be, in the partial obscurities, and for our captiousness in the seeming contradictions, of the holy Scriptures. They may teach us to exchange the solidity of argument for the petulance of wit—to prefer the ingenuity of hazardous explanation to the humility of implicit acquiescence—to venture on less crimes, because on other occasions we have abstained from greater—to justify our sins of negligence, because we are exempt from sins of presumption—to shift off the danger of errors from ourselves, and plant it upon the insidious misrepresentations of others—misrepresentations adopted before they were brought to the test of inquiry, and unsuspected, like the pretended permission of the angel, because they were

likely to soothe either the importunity of appetite or the pride of opinion. But on the first serious review of our actions and their motives—nay, upon the first involuntary return of calm and impartial reflection, all these unlicensed expedients will be quite unavailing. Under the pressure of adversity they will be rejected with disdain—amidst the pangs of sickness they will be remembered with horror—in the hour of death they cannot assuage our fears—and in the day of judgment they will most assuredly aggravate our condemnation.

To conclude. Whether the old Prophet of Bethel made his peace with Heaven by complete repentance, or whether he be reserved to that condemnation which finally will overtake the impenitent in proportion to their sins, are subjects on which the sacred writings are wholly silent. They do, indeed, mark in the strongest terms the guilt of both. Of the one, they inform us that he lied; and of the other, that he believed the lie and perished. In saying more, the historian might have amused our curiosity, but in saying only so much he has amply provided for our edification. He points out the duty of the most unreserved assent to the declarations of the Deity, and of the most implicit, direct, and plenary obedience to his commands. He cuts off every plea we may hope to allege from our own ignorance, negligence, and irresolution. He shews us that the artifices used by other men, however specious, will not be a sufficient excuse for us, if we yield to them in opposition to the clear and express voice of God. This, indeed—and I beseech

you to remember it well—this, I say, is the chief lesson which the story itself is calculated to impress upon every attentive reader, and to which the mind of the historian seems to have been principally directed. The disobedience of the prophet from Judah he relates minutely and forcibly, in its origin, its progress, and its fatal end. And though he abstains from pointing, in his own historical character, any severe reproach against the unhappy sufferer, he has arrayed the history with circumstances so numerous and so striking, that every serious examiner must see distinctly and fully the guilt of the deluded prophet. But the treachery of the prophet who dwelt at Beth-el, however atrocious in itself, is very properly branded with only one mark of reprobation; for it belongs, as it were, to a person of secondary importance in the drama; and, according to the rules of probability established by custom and founded on experience, while the fate and the conduct of the principal agent are clearly and judiciously stated, the strict claims of justice, as they stretch over subordinate characters, are not to the utmost possible extent satisfied. Unnecessary it was for the sacred writer either to be circumstantial in his narrative or keen in his censures, in order to provoke the indignation of his readers against this execrable act of perfidy in one of the prophets. The shortest and simplest relation was sufficient to excite it. And even if any tremendous punishment had fallen upon the head of the betrayer, it was scarcely necessary for it to be recorded, as the offence is too shocking to our sensibility to become

the object of deliberate imitation; but it was requisite, highly requisite, to point out both the sin and the danger into which the other prophet had so unhappily and so unexpectedly fallen. Even the worst of men would blush to urge any positive and unqualified excuse in behalf of the deceiver; but the best may find a most salutary warning in the sudden temptation, the sudden crime, and the sudden perdition of him that was deceived.

SERMON III.*

THE PARALYTIC.

MATT. IX. 5.

"*For whether is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee—or arise and walk.*"

It is my intention at our present meeting to consider the import of these words, as they stand connected with other circumstances relating to the cure of the palsied man, and to illustrate the very decisive argument which they contain for the confutation of those persons who misunderstood our Lord's design, and insulted his dignity. From this view of my subject, I shall be enabled, at some future opportunities, to insist upon such useful remarks as the text suggests for the conduct of our speculations. The last discourse will be employed in enforcing those practical directions which it abundantly supplies.

To every intelligent reader the words of my text convey a striking representation of our Lord's character, and fix the attention both on the dignity of his office and the amiableness of his temper. When the palsied man was brought forth, his ghastly looks, his

* Written Nov. 1779.

debilitated limbs, his long and complicated miseries, did not pass unnoticed. Instead of trifling with such extremity of distress, or aggravating it by painful uncertainty, our blessed Lord at once yields to the impulses of a generous and active compassion. He contrives to throw a new lustre around his favour by the condescension with which he bestowed it, and in these affectionate terms addressed the unhappy suppliant—Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

They who cavil malignantly, because they reason superficially upon sacred subjects; they who perplex what they do not understand, or depreciate what they cannot deny; they who catch at every seeming impropriety, and triumph in every imaginary objection, may, like the Jews, take offence at this declaration. Yet I will venture to pronounce it not less proper than it was kind, not less consistent with our Lord's station than expressive of his benevolence. For this end, I must carry back your thoughts to the express sanctions of the Jewish law, which were only temporal. The Jews were indeed habitually and authoratively taught to expect that the finger of God would be visibly pointed out in the chastisement of notorious sinners, and that his vengeance would take place in the ruin of their fortunes, in the destruction of their health, or in the untimely death and heavy calamities of themselves or their families. During that extraordinary providence which prevailed upon the establishment of the Mosaic economy, dispensations of this sort were neither unfrequent nor obscure; and even in later

ages the commission and the temporal punishment of sin were inseparably linked together, sometimes it should seem in fact, and generally in idea. In accommodation to this opinion must the sense of our Saviour be understood, (John, v. 14.) behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.

Now the person who had solicited the assistance of Christ was unquestionably a sinner. His disorder, therefore, was, upon Jewish principles, the proper, and to Jewish apprehensions the evident effect of his misconduct. Hence the sick man himself could be at no loss to discover the cause of his sufferings, and when he had discovered it, the pangs of disease were, no doubt, sharpened by an agonizing sense of guilt. In respect to our blessed Lord, he, it is plain, was no stranger either to the crimes which the sufferer had committed, or to the contrition he felt, or to the expectation he had formed of meeting with relief from a person distinguished as Christ was by signs and wonders. He saw too the same laudable docility of disposition, the same anxious expectations of relief in those companions of the paralytic, who had employed every expedient to lay the sufferer before Jesus. These various circumstances rendered the sufferer an object eminently deserving the exertion of our Lord's preternatural powers, because moral as well as religious purposes were effected by that exertion—because the removal of his misery implied the acceptance and the reward of his faith, and because the attendants who were melted into compassion by his disaster

might be warmed into gratitude upon his deliverance.

Indeed, to a person rightly disposed, nothing can be conceived more affecting than a solemn assurance of forgiveness; for, doubtless, the same admiration of Christ's virtues, and the same reliance on his mercy, which prompted the first application for succour to an afflicted body, must have inclined him more gladly to have welcomed the promise of pardon to his soul. Such probably were the conclusions of an understanding undebauched by false science, and unelated by spiritual pride, such the feelings of a heart, which affliction had taught the arduous but indispensible duties of humility and patience, of submission to God's appointments, however severe, and of dependence on his aid, however late.

But the conduct of the scribes upon this occasion was extravagantly absurd, as well as inexcusably wicked. Upon all principles of good nature they should have rejoiced in this act of kindness bestowed upon an unfortunate fellow-creature. Upon all principles of good sense they should have inferred the probability of a greater effect, from actual and repeated experience of other effects preternaturally great. Upon all principles of self-interest they should have looked upon this event as a pledge of the same relief treasured up for themselves, should they be placed in the same melancholy circumstances. The forgiveness of sins was not surely in itself less becoming a professed teacher of righteousness than the cure of sickness; and it was natural, I think, for those who were favoured with such

offers, not hastily to reject the assistance of which they might stand in need—not outrageously to insult the person who proposed it.

But the extravagances of self-delusion are boundless, and mock description. The scribes had often heard the pious instructions of Christ; they had seen his mighty works; but such was the baneful influence of bigotry, combined with selfishness, that they were alike unable to shake off the fetters of early prejudice, and to curb the sallies of licentious expectation. Their imaginations teemed with tumultuous and romantic notions of a Saviour who should restore their national grandeur, and continue all the daring innovations of priestcraft and superstition. They wished for a king, not for a reformer. They reserved their admiration for the frantic and impetuous courage of a conqueror, not for the calm and useful and lovely virtues of one who went about doing good. For these reasons they opposed the authority of their traditions almost to the testimony of their senses. They would listen to no instructor, but such an one as their own lawless and senseless prepossessions had pointed out. They would not accept salvation itself, unless upon the terms which themselves approved. Though sinful, helpless creatures, they disdained, as it were, the thought of being treated as such by their God; and they presumed to spurn away his best gifts, because tendered in a manner that neither flattered their vanity, nor fell in with their caprice. Better it was that their sufferings should not be alleviated, —their sins unpardoned, than that they should stoop

to accept mercy at the hand of a teacher, whose faint, ignoble claims to respect did not rise above this standard—were founded *upon this*, that he made the blind to see and the lame to walk.

Under the tyranny of this infatuation they were reduced to a condition the most wretched, surely, which imagination can form or guilt incur—when every act of kindness unavoidably carried with it a degree of indirect severity—when it was impossible even for the Saviour of the world to lighten their sufferings without condemning their perverseness. The penetration of our Lord pierced at once through the veil which hypocrisy had thrown over stubbornness. He therefore determined to crush every suspicion, either that he was unable to cure the sick man, or that, in order to colour over his real designs, and to support his groundless claims, he had arrogantly assumed that privilege which belongs to the Sovereign of the whole earth.

In the judicious execution of this design—in the gradual evolution of his right to forgive sins, there are some circumstances that well deserve our notice. By an instantaneous and direct compliance with the request of the sick man he might have obtained a conquest over the malice of his enemies, without a struggle against their obstinacy; but perceiving that the perverseness of the scribes was happily contrasted by the zeal of the paralytic and his friends, he judged it expedient to expose the one, and to gratify the other in the completest manner. He therefore delayed the cure of the paralytic till the stores of opposition were quite exhausted; and thus, by per-

mitting his claims to be disputed, he opened a wider range for their array, and made the display of them more decisive and more illustrious.

We have already heard the gracious and encouraging language by which he cheered the drooping spirits of the paralytic, and we have seen the Scribes preparing to insult him with the grossest and most virulent reproach. While they were harbouring every unworthy jealousy—while they were cherishing every unkind construction, and exulting in their supposed victory, Christ interrupts them in the career of their malignant triumph by this spirited appeal to their reason — this pertinent answer to their evil thoughts—"for whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or, arise, and walk?" In this manner might a Christian teacher be permitted, with humility indeed, but I hope without impropriety, to unfold the argument implied in my text. You will easily perceive that I mean to spread that argument through all the circumstances of the story here recorded, and to support it by such considerations as were more immediately applicable to the sinner whom our Lord now addressed.

When the character of Christ is marked by the strongest and most amiable features of compassion to the distressed, and of candour to the misguided, why do you enviously undervalue his kindness, or perversely misrepresent his intentions? If you insist that it is far easier for Christ to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, than, Arise and walk—to promise a thing invisible than to pledge himself for the performance of an action that falls within your senses,—you

mistake the question, and you are in reality comparing, not the power of Christ to do either, but your own capacity to know when they are not done. As to the works themselves, it rests with you to shew that a much greater authority is requisite to forgive the sins that were the cause of the palsy, than to remove the palsy that was the effect of the sins; or rather, that the same authority which accomplishes the one does not virtually and implicitly give evidence to the other. To alleviate distress is the property of God's mercy and omnipotence; and to remit punishment that of his mercy and justice. In each case, then, Christ exercises a privilege with which God only could invest him; in each he is strictly and solely the instrument of God's dispensation; and in each he has a title to your dispassionate and serious attention. Had he immediately cured the sick man by God's authority, you would perhaps in this instance, as in parallel instances some of you certainly have treated him with a kind of occasional extorted respect. When he absolves the man by the same authority, then, as you exclaim, this man blasphemes, as if either act were altogether his own; or rather as if it were less practicable for God to grant him one privilege than the other, or less expedient for him to do so, when the ends of his government and the interests of his creatures required it. But you still insist that it is more difficult to do what it was easier to say, that it implies a more honourable commission, a more extensive power to forgive sins, than to enable a paralytic to rise and walk. Be it so; but by this

very concession you allow it physically possible for God to confer such a power, and you pave the way for a clear and a complete solution of the case in dispute.

When Nathan informed David that he was forgiven, and that the sentence of death was reversed, do you charge the prophet with impiety, and do you not suppose him to have acted not only consistently with his prophetic office, but in consequence of it? The faith of the paralytic corresponds to the repentance of David; and in virtue of their respective merits both are fit objects of the Divine mercy. Why then do you honour Nathan and dishonour Christ? But in the case of David, the event, it seems, confirmed the declaration. You allow then, not only that God may bestow the power of forgiving sins, but evince the existence of that power by adequate and unequivocal proofs. Let us apply this acknowledgment:—You suppose a connection between the offences and the sufferings of the paralytic, and of course you ought to admit a connection between his recovery and his pardon. But whether that opinion be well-grounded or no,—from whatever cause the palsy may have originated, you cannot have a more apposite or convincing proof that he is forgiven than when he is instantaneously cured by the very person who announces that forgiveness. By this test, therefore, we will try your favourite position concerning the extent of the right asserted by Christ. If the cure be hereafter performed,—if it be ascertained by the most direct and unambiguous proofs, then the charge of

blasphemy recoils with redoubled weight on you who have levelled it against Christ; but the consequence strikes at the credit of your understanding as well as your hearts; and then to persevere in your unbelief will be to deny the very conclusion when established by an evidence confessed stronger, and which you would have been induced to admit in favour of Christ's pretensions to the title of Messiah, when they stood upon weaker ground.

The force of this reasoning is, I think, obvious to the most uncultivated understanding, and by the most vigorous it cannot be shaken. In the application of it we are warranted by the subsequent conduct of our Lord himself, for he gave the fullest confirmation to his words by a fact similar to that from which we have supposed their credibility to be derived. He explicitly and peremptorily insisted upon his right to forgive sins; and instantly turning aside to the paralytic, he said, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine own house. What transports, think you, must this additional instance of goodness have excited within the bosom of the palsied man. It must have roused within him every sentiment of affection and reverence towards such a deliverer, and must have firmly established that faith which gave rise to his pious, his humble and successful request. On the other hand, among those who had insolently called in question the ability of Christ to work this miracle, and who in the blindness of their rage had aimed against him the shocking charges of imposture and impiety, every cavil must have been repressed, and every prepossession suspended

in silence and in shame. The scribes, if they would not acknowledge Christ, were at least not hardy enough to repeat their insult—to avow their illiberal suspicions; and as to the common people, they beheld this act of mercy in its brightest splendour, and its fullest magnitude.

In respect to the friends of the paralytic, whose well-meant and well-worded confidence our blessed Lord had so condescendingly encouraged and so amply rewarded, they doubtless felt their faith ripen into conviction. Upon their friend they could not reflect without exchanging congratulation for condolence, and to his deliverer they looked up at once animated with gratitude and impressed with veneration. Even the multitude, unable to contradict the miracles of which they had been eye-witnesses, and unwilling to stifle the honest emotions of their heart, expressed their thanks to Almighty God, who had given such power unto men.

SERMON IV.

MATTHEW ix. 5.

For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or Arise, and walk?

You may recollect that, upon a former occasion, I endeavoured to explain to you the principles of our Lord's reasoning in the words of my text, and that I insisted much upon the advantages which the miraculous recovery of the paralytic seemed to derive from the opposition and the scruples of the Jewish scribes—an opposition permitted only to be defeated—scruples not crushed by the sternness of reproof, but removed by the most obvious and the most decisive confutation.

Admirable indeed was the propriety with which our Lord conducted himself upon this occasion; and at the same time, I must observe to you, that the very different methods he pursued upon almost all other occasions was equally proper. I mean, that the evidences by which he established the divinity of his mission were simply exhibited, not elaborately enforced—that the connection between his miracles and his doctrine was illustrated by facts rather than deduced from argumentations—that the proofs he employed were not only apposite in

themselves, but were produced in the most judicious manner, and were left to work, by their own intrinsic, unaided force, on those principles of belief which are implanted in us by nature, and which, even when they have been little cultivated by study, act with a kind of instinctive quickness and regularity, unless warped by prepossession or obstructed by indolence.

The simplicity of which I am now speaking was diffused through every part of our Lord's behaviour. It distinguished his words as well as his actions, and it forms a most striking presumption in favour of his religion. Thus, when he delivers a precept, no subtlety is used to captivate the judgment, no oratory is displayed to rouse the passions. When he refers to a prophecy, the correspondent deeds of his life are seldom crowded together into one shining group, or arranged with all the curious exactness of method, or poized, as it were, in a balance with the language of the prophet; we are neither bewildered by that affected secrecy in which the magicians of Egypt muffled up their arts, nor dazzled by the glare that other impostors have industriously thrown around their delusive exhibitions of effects in appearance preternatural. When he performs a miracle, no intricate thread of connection is interwoven between the teacher and his precepts. We are amused with no ostentatious panegyric on his wisdom or his power. For the reality of the fact Christ appealed to the senses of the spectators; and, as to the application of it to the credibility of his pretensions, he trusted to those

artless operations of the human mind by which we are usually led through the shortest and the safest path to truth. If, indeed, the miracle were in itself obscure, all intricacy of argument, and all pomp of diction, would have been useless, and might have engendered suspicion. If the miracle were real and clear, they would have been superfluous, as they could not, in general, confirm conviction.

In the words of my text, our blessed Lord certainly deviates from the method he generally observes; and he has recourse to such reasonings as were called out by the obstinate resistance, or the illiberal jealousies, of those to whom he addressed himself. Not to have reasoned in these circumstances would, therefore, have been as unworthy of his discretion, and of his dignity, as in other cases it was worthy of both to perform miracles in an open and undisguised manner, and then leave their effect to the feelings and good sense of those who beheld them. Here then arises a double proof for the authority of Christ's religion; for, surely, if it supports itself sometimes without any argument, and sometimes by employing only the most pertinent and the most inartificial, it deserves to be sheltered from contemptuous cavil, and may justly avail itself of every advantage which serious and dispassionate inquiry can afford to any cause. Might I be permitted to speak from my own sensibilities, I should say, that the peculiarity of our Lord's manner extends even to this seeming deviation from it; for the argument used against the scribes is concise, is pointed, is proposed without any vehemence of af-

firmation, any involution of reasoning, any splendour of expression. Why think you evil in your hearts, for whether, &c.

If this be the case, what plea can be urged for that very extensive amplification, or that very artificial defence of our Lord's, which I lately set before you? The propriety of that copious explanation is apparently grounded on the difference between your situation and that of the Jews. Their impressions were more sudden than yours can be, as they saw and heard that of which you only can read, and read, too, under the want of that luminousness and energy which the associations of our ideas acquire by contiguity of time or place. Those impressions must have been more vivid than yours, as the facts, which are laid before you with all the tedious minuteness of detail, presented themselves together in one strong point of view to the Jews. Hence the evidence, which, proposed to them, did not require the aid of argumentation, when proposed to you, admits and even demands it—admits it, if you bring with you the honest disposition of the paralytic, and are prepared to believe in proportion as you understand—demands it, if you labour under the prejudices of the Scribes, and will not yield your assent, till every proof, whether fundamental or subordinate, be adduced, and every objection, whether strong or feeble, be confuted.

There is, indeed, so great a dissimilarity between your circumstances and those of the Jews, that, in applying the same terms indiscriminately to your faith and to theirs, some obscurity or incorrectness

would probably arise. The propositions on which they decided were not drawn up with art, but proposed without ornament or parade—not explained by a gradual succession of evidences addressed to the understanding solely, but proved clearly and instantaneously by an appeal to their senses. Their faith was therefore founded upon certainty. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah, because they knew that he had cured the paralytic. But you are under the necessity of inverting the order in which their conviction was produced. You are obliged to collect proofs of various kinds from various quarters, and to infer from their united force the probability that Christ worked the miracle before you can infer from the miracle the justness of his claims to the title of Messiah.

Hence I expatiated upon the correspondence between the fact recorded in the chapter of my text, and the character of Christ, to whom the cure of the paralytic is ascribed, because that correspondence affords no inconsiderable proof in the question before us. But let it not be repeated, though it has been petulantly said that our holy religion is not founded upon arguments—that it is built upon faith, and not upon reason. The assertion is groundless, whether your case or that of the Jews be considered; for reason, if by that word is meant the faculty of judging, was certainly exercised by both; and arguments, if the expression implies propositions where premises are necessarily connected with their consequences, have been as certainly employed by both. The Jew says, if Messiah come, could

he do greater things than this man doth? The Christian says, no man can do these things which he doth unless God be with him. Both the Jew and the Christian, therefore, conclude that he is of a truth the prophet who should come into the world. In each process, I will grant, for the sake of hypothesis, that you may have reasoned erroneously from false premises; you may have argued weakly from partial information; but the chasm is immense between the unsuccessful voluntary exercise of our faculties, and a tame and voluntary resignation of them—between mistake, which may befall the wisest of men, and lazy, blind submission, which belongs only to the meanest and the most despicable.

You now see the reasons which induced me to draw forth the whole force of our Lord's meaning, to point out the relation that subsisted between his doctrines and his miracles, and thus to shew you the direct tendency, which his words had in this state of collected strength, to overcome the doubts and to refute the cavils of the contentious Scribes. To the conviction then wrought in you, I hope to give new stability by the farther prosecution of my subject. For you may remember that I promised to consider those useful directions, which the history, as formerly explained to you, seems to suggest, for the general management of our speculations.

The stubbornness of the Jews in disputing the right of Jesus to forgive sins should preserve us from rashly deciding on the propriety, or the possibility of such measures as are positively ascribed to

the Deity. His essential attributes are doubtless a security to us for the fitness of every appointment, of which he is really the author; but that any controverted dispensation actually could not proceed from him, is a conclusion which we have no warrant to draw till the stupendous frame of the universe in its full extent—till the inherent properties and mutual relations of its various parts—till the natural, the moral, and the religious schemes of things, as they exist separately, or act conjointly, are completely and distinctly known. Were that knowledge indeed conferred upon us, our conceptions would in all cases be direct and adequate, appearances would coincide with realities, and consummate fitness would seem to prevail, as it does prevail in every measure of the Almighty; but he who bestowed upon us our understandings has likewise assigned to them their boundaries, which cannot be passed; and therefore, in our present state of conscious imperfection, we should adopt different modes of judging, and expect different kinds of evidence, according to the difference of the topics on which our thoughts are exercised—to their absolute difference, as whether they be works of God or man—to their relative difference, as whether they be contemplated by beings whose capacities are more or less enlarged.

Am I, then, degrading human reason to the lowest standard; and, while I insist upon the extreme ignorance of men, am I inadvertently throwing open the door to scepticism, instead of justifying faith? Far from it. In cases which admit of

certainty, we may advance securely to the point of demonstration; and conviction, fixed here, is not liable to be shaken by the most stubborn difficulties hitherto perceived, or by the possibility of difficulties yet more formidable that may hereafter occur. Increasing knowledge may remove the former, solutions not yet provided may guide future inquirers through the latter; and though neither of these suppositions should be realized, opposite demonstrations cannot co-exist; and therefore one genuine demonstration must triumph over probable arguments, though plausibly urged and infinitely multiplied. But, in questions limited by probability, we proceed by other rules, and evidence on each side will force some degree of assent; and, in proportion to its comparative strength, may be said to weaken the opposite evidence. All assumptions, therefore, founded upon our ignorance, that is, all positive deductions, supported only by negative proofs, are on every subject precarious; and upon religious subjects, where the human faculties are so disproportionate, or rather incommensurate, to the Divine, the utmost caution is not only expedient but indispensible. Yet on these subjects every impartial man must acknowledge, as every good man laments, the frowardness and presumption of his fellow-creatures. When we are depressed by melancholy, when we are irritated by fretfulness, or elated by mere vanity, the uncertainty of seasons, the devastations of tempests, the transitoriness of criminal pleasure, and the intenseness of corporeal pain, impel us to charge imperfection on the works of God.

Nor do we suffer the petulance of objection to stop here. For with the same folly, terminating in the same guilt, we complain of our limited faculties at the very instant in which we are deciding on questions to which the most comprehensive are barely competent; we censure the permission of evil while we arrogate those distinctions to which an eminent degree of moral excellence can alone entitle us; and we are sometimes frantic enough to arraign the wisdom of that agency from which proceeds all the good we ourselves really practise, and all that we can conceive practicable by any being who is less than infinite.

As these objections more immediately relate to the truths of natural than of revealed religion, it does not come within the limits of the present discourse to confront them with distinct replies; but it is not beside my purpose to say that they arise from the same narrow and erroneous notions of fitness which induced the Jews to deny the authority of Christ to forgive sins. It is not beside my present purpose to add, that the shortness of our views from human infirmity, their obliquity from prejudice, their obscurity from passion, supply a very proper answer to such complaints as are aimed against the physical and moral, as well as the religious appointments of the Deity. It falls immediately within my purpose, and is in itself most worthy of observation, that the men who have levelled their attacks against the one, are equally distinguished by the severity and the insidiousness of their efforts to discredit the other. Mark, however

their inconsistency—I was on the point of saying their infatuation—I will say their unfairness: when natural religion is to be depreciated, the designs of God are so dark that they do not admit rational assent, or so inconsistent that they repel it—when Christianity is to be subverted, then the purposes of Heaven, in the ordinary course of things, is so clear as to furnish the most copious and satisfactory presumptions against the existence of an extraordinary dispensation—then the principles of virtue are obvious, and a revelation to enforce them is superfluous—then he has fixed the operations of nature by laws, the excellence of which depends upon their stability, and miracles are impossible. But what contempt would these very men have expressed to a Jew, had he disputed after their manner—if Christ does not bring with him a commismission to forgive sins he is not the Messiah; if he professes to bring such a commission he is an impostor. To state such futile, incoherent sophistry, is to confute it most effectually.

As philosophers we admit the justice of the accusation, and as Christians we may retort it with equal severity on those by whom it is employed. If the physical dispensations are not clear, the reality of miracles may be proved by external testimony, to which obscurity in the things testified is, upon the principles of our antagonists, no reasonable objection, as they share it in common with other works of the Deity, the existence of which is acknowledged. If those dispensations are clear, we yet contend that the possibility of miracles is not

absolutely disproved, as it implies no contradiction for God to suspend general laws, or to act by particular laws. The nature and evidence of miracles has been involved in much perplexity by the efforts of men whose abilities are equally remarkable for their magnitude and their misapplication. Now, if their positions be as just as they are specious, all the speculative arguments I have deduced from the recovery of the paralytic, and all the practical admonitions I may hereafter found upon it, will be without authority and without use. Pursuing, therefore, the reflections suggested by the text, I mean to explain the real import of the objection, which has been much confounded, and to ascertain its real force, which has been much exaggerated; but, as a wide field of inquiry here opens itself, I must defer the execution of this design to a future opportunity.

To conclude—The general observations now laid before you must be considered as preparatory to the particular inquiry which I intend to make into the miraculous powers of our blessed Lord; but, independently of such application, they may be of general utility, as they strike at the root of those vices which mark the character of the scribes, and which are too predominant among those who challenge to themselves the sacred name of Christians. They may check that presumption with which we are too apt to dogmatize on what God has done, and to presume concerning what he cannot do—where our opportunities of judging are scarce, our materials to judge scanty, our rules of judging at once imperfect and fallacious. They may soften

that uncharitableness with which we hurl down the reputation of other men, who with talents as improved, and with intentions as upright as our own, have fallen into mistakes without the guilt of rashness. What the Deity has kept back from our view is sufficient to make us humble; what he has shewn to us is equally sufficient to make us pious, if our hearts be rightly disposed; and alas! if this best source of virtue be once contaminated, it is not only difficult but useless to refine our opinions from the grossest adhesions of error. The understandings of the Scribes were doubtless convinced at the moment by the stupendous exertion of Christ's mercy in the cure of the paralytic, but their moral habits, I fear, were not corrected. Though the clearest light had shone upon them, they soon relapsed into the dominion of their inveterate prejudices. We have at least every reason to imagine that they did not embrace Christianity cordially, sincerely, and, though a miracle had been worked in its support, they were not persuaded to adopt it as the rule of their actions and the foundation of their hopes.

SERMON V.

MATTHEW ix. 5.

"For whether is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or, Arise and walk."

WHEN I first addressed you on these words, I explained to you the circumstances of the story recorded by the Evangelist, and examined the principles of the reasoning which our Lord employed against the scribes. I afterwards applied those reasonings to the management of every abstruse speculation, in which religion is concerned, and among other uses to which they are subservient I had occasion to throw out some introductory remarks on the subject of miracles.

The intention of this discourse is to shew, that miracles, considered as deviations from the ordinary course of things, are not impossible, and therefore as attestations to the truth of any religion are not useless, and consequently not incredible. When these general positions are established, the peculiar evidences of Christianity may be investigated with more exactness. For what God can perform by his own immediate agency, it involves no contradiction to say that he may enable a created being to perform; and it implies no absurdity to imagine that

either interposition may be distinguished by proofs equally convincing, and be intended for purposes equally beneficial. At present I mean only to lay before you a regular series of my own observations on this interesting question, and to fix the foundation of those answers which I may hereafter give to such objections as are most eminent for their popularity, or most formidable for their strength.

There once flourished a sect of philosophers, who professedly excluded the Deity from all concerns in the affairs of this lower world. The plea which they urged in defence of this daring but comfortless tenet was, that exertion in the human soul always implied want—always produced pain, and must therefore be derogatory to the dignity, and inconsistent with the happiness, of the Divine nature. Upon a similar principle, though perhaps it be scarce suspected by those whom it influences, there are many persons who, while they admit, and even because they admit, the doctrine of a general providence, most pertinaciously resist every attempt that is made to convince them of miraculous interpositions. Such interposition carries with it an appearance of some imperfection in the works of God. It betrays, say they, an original weakness, or a subsequent variableness in the workman himself.

For the errors of the Epicurean, it may be pleaded that metaphysics were in those ages a train of subtle deductions from unauthorized, obscure assumptions, and that physics were but a mass of conjectures without reasoning, and reasonings with-

out facts. But it is not so easy to excuse the mistakes of those who have lived in later and in better times, when revealed religion has gradually led men into clearer notions of the doctrines that relate to natural, and when philosophy, founding system upon experiment, has conducted them into a more enlarged and correct view of the rules by which the world in which we are to act is regulated. The Epicurean consistently shut out that divine energy from the government of the universe, which he did not think essential to the creation of it. We, on the contrary, admit that energy in the creation, though we have no distinct conception of the manner in which it operated, and then limit the uses of it in the government of the world, by our own shallow and precarious notions of fitness.

Much of the perplexity that entangles our thoughts on this topic, has arisen from the unavoidable deficiency of human language, where the divine operations are concerned—from the application of familiar terms to ideas not yet familiar—from the negligence of disputants in adopting ambiguous words, or their obstinacy in not receding from those which have been already misapplied. Thus miracles have been called violations of the laws of nature—where violation is confounded with suspension; and, in a case where the cause ought not to be overlooked, the laws of nature are considered as effects with a careless or a studied inattention to the cause.

Again, the course of nature has been first applied to the general order of events, and then followed up by consequences, which belong only to

its most extended signification, as including the aggregate of God's appointments; and sometimes the question has been petulantly begged, and such a meaning industriously affixed to the term, as excluded all interposition whatsoever. For my part I do not wish to cavil at an expression so familiarized by custom, and so dignified by the authority of those who use it, if it always has a reference and a proportionate one to its objective realities in the works of God. But those works themselves are differently conceived by different men; where they are with some exactness understood, they are understood in different degrees of extent; and in the most extensive are partially known—known so partially as to supply no positive proof against the existence of miracles, either as they are recorded in the Scriptures, or as they are explained by those persons, who, in the ablest and most impartial manner have vindicated the credibility, and illustrated the doctrines of revelation. The laws of the material world, which operate without the concurrence of magnetism and electricity, do not disprove the use or the appointment of other laws, in which their concurrence is necessary. In the same manner the moral dispensations of God, as they are carried on by natural religion, may yet leave room for other ends, which revealed only can answer. Though it be true that human agency is often successful in the gradual removal of inveterate and acute disorders, it is not therefore false, that the divine agency has in some cases been visibly employed to remove them instantaneously.

It has been said with more subtlety I think than solidity, that creation is a miracle. Upon the principles of some among our adversaries, who are equally remarkable for the boldness of their positions and the intricacy of their sophisms, it may indeed be said justly; for, as every thing unprecedented is in their opinion miraculous, they must either admit the eternity of the world, or fix upon some other criterion for proving the impossibility of miracles. But it were superfluous and even disingenuous to have recourse to refinements of this kind, for the sake either of elucidating what is true, or refuting what is false upon the present topic. We may say intelligibly and honestly that a creation as well as a miracle is an extraordinary event—that reason tells us of the one, it must be; and of the other it does not inform us, that it cannot be. Miracles however, it is certain, have a reference to a course of events generally preserved and generally known; and in their dissimilitude to that course consist both their specific nature, and their final use. But however distinguished from those events, they may not be incompatible with them; they may have been included with them in the original plan that comprehended the whole; they may co-operate with them in effecting those purposes for which the whole is designed.

Our conceptions become often confused, and our reasonings are misguided by indiscriminate adoptions of popular notions, or indeterminate use of popular language. Hence the laws of nature, from the uniformity of their operations, imperceptibly

lead us to resolve that uniformity into some inherent, immutable, and almost independent power in matter itself. But when the effects of it are nicely analyzed, when the properties are profoundly investigated, we find that the activity ascribed to it is merely nominal, that it is in reality passive only, that every change is only a change of mode, and is the result of an external activity, not only distinct in itself, but different in kind. However various may be the species, or however numerous the degrees of intermediate agency, whatever be the qualities of intellectual beings, whatever the properties of inanimate, they are in some respects mediately or immediately, they are in others both mediately and immediately dependent upon the original, the supreme, and universal cause. In that cause we must ultimately rest; we ascend to it by the safest and surest gradations, whether the universe be apparently governed by the force of mechanical laws, or by the influence of created beings; whether those laws were fixed primarily and unalterably, or whether the old be occasionally changed and new ones introduced. Whatever exists, and whatever acts, proceeds from the arbitrary appointment of him who can destroy as well as create; who can suspend as well as perpetuate; who can alter as well as preserve; they are effected by a power which is indiscriminately and evidently adequate to all events, be they few or many according to human conception—be they difficult or easy, as measured not only by human agents, but any other beings, however exalted their station, and however extensive their capacities.

Many persons who reject the belief of a particular providence, found their dissent not upon the impossibility of the thing itself, but on the supposition that all the ends which ought to be answered in a state of discipline are completely answered by the general providence. Their opinion rests surely upon a principle on which the scantiness of our prospects, and the weakness of our judgment should prevent us from reposing an unlimited and implicit confidence; but whether the principle be just or not, a particular providence is not, according to their own confession, inconsistent with a general, should God ordain it; and he that can conceive their consistence will be at no loss to perceive how it is possible for extraordinary dispensations to be compatible with ordinary. I must however most earnestly press this interesting consideration upon your minds, that extraordinary and ordinary appointments are terms relative only to our weak conceptions. For miracles are in fact neither contrary to the course of nature philosophically as well as religiously explained, nor are they superior to it; they rather make a part of it; for the laws of God it must ever be remembered, include the whole will of God—that will in consequence of which all things exist, in modes infinitely various, and for ends unsearchably righteous.

As then miracles imply no contradiction, they are conceivable, and of course possible, in that wonderful extent of design which God is pursuing towards creatures whose existence may be perpetuated to eternity, and whose happiness or misery are

linked to a boundless chain of events. As they do not destroy the efficacy of general laws, they by no means discredit the proper perfection of those laws, which consist in accommodation to their respective ends; and they form a part of those dispensations which have God for their author, and intellectual immortal beings for their objects, they contribute to the glory—they industriously mark and eventually promote the excellence of his moral government. In this point of view, miracles, instead of counteracting the laws of nature, coincide and cooperate with them; instead of supplying their defects they promote collateral ends, for which those laws were not intended, and need not be intended, as other means equally efficacious are provided.

As God in the preternatural communications of his will employs human instruments, so it is not improbable that in the miraculous works attending such communications, he in a secret unknown manner applies those rules by which the natural world is evidently governed. In the course of our physical speculations, our received opinions are often staggered by appearances, which it is not easy to reconcile to the known laws of motion, and the known properties of matter; and upon these occasions the repeated detection of the mistakes that follow precipitancy, induces us to suspend our judgments, and to confess our ignorance. Ought we not therefore to do the same, if such appearance occur in the form of miracles, where the nature of the fact would incline every contemplative man to expect some difficulties. If a stone were suspended

in the air, I should not suspect that the laws by which bodies tend to the earth were violated, but that some invisible force of opposite attraction was exerted; and should such a phenomenon take place at the command of a person who employed no outward means, and who professed to act by a divine commission, I should pronounce the event miraculous. I should not say that the essential laws of nature were destroyed, but that in this instance they operated in some mode which baffles my conjectures, but which by no means authorizes me to deny the fact.

Thus explained to you, miracles are no proofs of imperfection in the works of God, and in respect to the Deity himself, I cannot perceive the force of those reasons which represent interposition as disgraceful. Activity is surely more consistent with our ideas of a Deity than sloth; the happiness resulting from a constant and unbounded communication of good is far more magnificent than dull tranquillity; attention to his works is more worthy of an artificer than inattention; and attention without correspondent real guidance, were neither useful in itself, nor honourable to God. It implies, I am sure, no greater effort to change than to create; creation was confessedly unattended with labour, and why then should it be any degradation to the majesty of the Supreme Being—any interruption to his repose—any diminution of the harmony and beauty which prevail in the world, that opportunities should exist upon which rules of acting seldom expedient should sometimes become so? I must at the same

time observe to you, that the reality of miracles may be supported even upon the contrary hypothesis; for at the moment in which this world was produced, and the laws that govern it were immutably ordained, such causes may have been appointed as, in given circumstances, should work out the very effects which we call miracles. But the opposite opinion, which ascribes interposition to God, may plead long prescription in its favour, for it has prevailed in all ages, barbarous and civilized; it is supported by the united testimony of history, sacred and profane; it has been professed, as we trust, without hypocrisy, and defended, as we know, without absurdity, by persons most enlightened in their understandings, and most exemplary in their piety.

Reflect, I beseech you, on the nature of God, and that of men:—exertion in man is the cause of pain, because his sphere of action is limited, because he works on materials created independently of himself, and not always flexible to his strength or skill, and, above all, because human agency is conducted by a train of mixed operations—by the exercise of powers dissimilar, and often disproportionate, partly spiritual, and partly material. But exertion, as clogged with the idea of embarrassment, cannot be imputed to the Deity, since his sphere of action is unlimited—since he created the materials himself—and since his essence is of the purest and most excellent kind.

It may assist us yet further in extricating our minds from the difficulties, which interposition rashly confounded with exertion is apt to suggest,

if we distinguish between the works and the will of God. From the works succession is inseparable, whether we consider them as beings distinct from each other in time and place, or as the same individual beings, of which the preservation, for aught we know, is but a perpetuated creation. On the other hand, we can form no adequate or direct opinion of the order in which things are conceived by a divine intelligence, and, at all events, every perplexing and dishonourable consequence which arises from succession of thoughts in a finite being, to a being whose thoughts are wavering in the wide and dark regions of conjecture, cannot be ascribed to him, who is infinite without impropriety as well as presumption. Whatever was created might have existed earlier, and is it a dishonour that it did not? Would delay have furnished a just presumption that what did not exist would not? In whatsoever manner the Deity acts, he acts for the best; and why then should not this truth be extended to the disposal of things already made, as well as to the original appointment by which they were made?

But without the aid of these abstract considerations we may crush all distressing suspicions of toil and labour, by pursuing the obvious consequences of that omnipotence, which is reasonably and generally ascribed to God. The same arguments which convince us of his omnipotence inform us, that his agency is perpetual—that the power to act continues inexhaustible—that no distraction can belong to his counsels, however complex; and no weariness in the exertion of them, however vast. He speaks,

and all things are made. He commands, and they are created. Independently of the evidence supplied by testimony, philosophy cannot rise beyond presumptive proofs, and presumption, I am sure, will determine us in favour of interposition.

Let us pursue this inquiry, from which we may draw out some arguments for the credibility of miracles, on the ground of their expedience. To all events, be they common or uncommon, the presence, and surely the agency of God (it may be said in some sense) are essentially necessary; but if a moral sense of that agency be, as it unquestionably is, of supreme importance to the happiness of his creatures in a probationary state, the interruption as well as the preservation of that course in which things usually flow on, is calculated to make very useful impressions on a being situated and disposed as man is—on a being possessed of such faculties, and surrounded by such weaknesses. In order to perform the will, and to obtain the approbation of God, men must be first taught to acknowledge his existence; and to this knowledge, to the admiration of his wisdom, his goodness, his power, they are conducted through the numberless displays of those attributes that are spread in boundless profusion over the spacious and magnificent theatre of this visible world. But admiration soon exhausts itself, and in proportion to the intenseness with which it has been exerted, it is succeeded by lassitude and listlessness, by unwillingness to contemplate what astonished and confounded in the aggregate, and by conscious inability to eulogize all the constituent and con-

nected parts. Hence the strongest emotions are frequently the most transient, and the most brilliant objects familiarized by repetition are seen with calm indifference or stupid insensibility. Nay, the very excellence of the work makes us lose sight of the author; or, affecting to elevate our minds above vulgar prejudice, we take a pride not only in withdrawing our wonder from the beauties, but in employing our reason upon the discovery of faults in the universe. This impious perverseness is indeed confined to the few whose principles are debauched by the insolence of false science; but with the generality of mankind, it is the conditions and the circumstances of things rather than their qualities and their use, by which our minds are most powerfully affected: whence it happens, that he who forgets a God, while he is enlightened and refreshed by the sun, is suddenly compelled to acknowledge and to adore him, if the splendour of that sun be unexpectedly darkened, or its warmth withdrawn. I am not concerned to vindicate this constitution of the human mind, though, on many accounts, it seems highly adapted to our state of moral discipline. I contend only for the fact itself, and that fact clearly points out the utility of occasional interpositions in rousing men from their lethargy, in confirming the doubtful, and in terrifying the presumptuous.

We do not then conceive unbecomingly of God in supposing that he employs such interposition when the most momentous ends of his government require it; and as the physical constitution of things seems upon the whole subordinate and instrumental

to the moral, we have a certain proof that the Deity may—we have no obscure presumption that he will —give such new and extraordinary directions to the former as are adapted to the new and extraordinary exigencies of the latter. Whether or no such exigencies have existed is a point of speculation, where we should be cautious of presumptuously deciding in the negative. Whether he has thus interposed is a question of fact, where no contemptible force of arguments may be produced on the positive side. But all I have hitherto maintained amounts to this, —that the frame of the human mind furnishes a very striking proof for the utility of interposition; and the course of human affairs is not such as to disprove the possibility of it. In respect to Christianity, the proofs may not be sufficient to shew it strictly necessary; but the ignorance and corruptions of men make such a dispensation desirable; its precepts and its promises, from the tendency they have to render us happy, authorize us to pronounce it very expedient, and perhaps we are not mistaken even in calling it necessary, if the moral designs of the Deity really be—and who shall demonstrate they are not?—such as the Scriptures represent them; I mean, if he be pleased to exact from us the duties there enjoined, in order to qualify us for the rewards there inculcated. They are duties most improving to us, as we are rational beings; they are rewards most encouraging to us, if we be immortal.

In the ordinary works of God there is an inexhaustible variety, from which we may infer that

there is a variety also in the extraordinary—that of beings invested with miraculous powers some may have greater or less capacity to perform them, according to the dignity of their character, and the importance of their mission—that some may be empowered to restore diseases, some to foretell future events, some to forgive sins, some to raise the dead, and some to accomplish all these stupendous works. But if the argument from analogy be unsatisfactory, it must be owned, that the acknowledgment of a divine power cuts off all right of determining whether it shall be exerted in few or many instances, in this manner or in that;—the effects by the supposition exceed all human agency, they are explicable only by the interposition of the divine, and of course all ordinary measures of more or less difficult, more or less proper, become inadequate, and, it is to be feared, sometimes fallacious. Thus in the nature of things, if Christ be enabled to work miracles, he might with the same ease literally move a mountain as restore the limbs of a paralytic; if he were an inspired teacher of righteousness, he might with equal propriety forgive sins as reward virtues.

Perhaps the progress of human conceptions may lead to a conclusion the very opposite of that which is usually admitted. If the cause is to be measured by the effect, miracles upon the first superficial view demonstrate less power than the general frame of the universe. Reasoning from our own experience of comparative difficulties, we should conclude the force which suspended the planets, but for the shortest time, as inferior to that which preserved their regu-

lar motions through a long succession of ages;—guided only by our own ideas of fitness, we should say it is more probable that a penitent would be pardoned, than that a paralytic should be instantaneously cured. I would not be understood to insinuate, that in either case we judge by an unerring rule, or that in reality it is more proper and more easy for the Deity to do one than the other, because our ideas suggested only by the operations of finite beings, could guide us to such a conclusion; but I do contend, that the cavils of Jews and infidels are inconsistent with the measure by which they profess to regulate their opinions, and that to our imagination at least there is less difficulty in conceiving a planet arrested in its career for a moment, than moved for a thousand years—in conceiving bodily organs restored to their use than originally created—in conceiving a repentant sinner pardoned than a paralytic cured at a touch, by a word, in an instant.

The result of the arguments here adduced is this—that the miracles in the nature of things are not impossible, and that in many situations to which we are exposed from our infirmities and our vices, they may be eminently useful in recalling the attention of men to violated duties and neglected truths, in checking their rashness, enlightening their ignorance, and rectifying their mistakes. This tendency has been acknowledged by persons whom we cannot suspect of credulity upon the topics of philosophy, or of superstition on those of piety. An ancient writer * affects to retract those tenets which denied

* Horace.

an over-ruling providence, when he had heard the sound of thunder on a serene and undisturbed sky; and it was explicitly confessed by a modern infidel,* that he would immediately renounce his system, could he be permitted to see a dead man rise from his grave. The laws of nature, I have maintained, are neither a defensible nor intelligible term, than as it is understood to imply the whole of God's dispensations; but the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary interpositions is extremely momentous to creatures short-sighted as ourselves, whether we would investigate the natural causes of things, or defend the truth of revelation.

Among persons of inquisitive and cultivated minds, the knowledge of a God must be first obtained by our observation of the ordinary—till this is done, the extraordinary, whether known to us by experience or testimony, can answer no religious purpose; and therefore one of the writers above-mentioned did not reason inconsistently, when he ascribed every wonderful as well as familiar event to the agency of blind, unintelligent chance. He had first conceived the fortuitous concourse of atoms capable of producing a world; and, therefore, if any surprising change took place in the external appearances of things, he reasonably imputed the less effect to the same case which effected the greater. But when the being and the attributes of a Deity have been collected from the usual operations of nature, the mind becomes prepared to ac-

* Spinoza.

knowledge the same power in any deviation from the customary course of things. Christ professed to teach the word of God, and to establish the divinity of his mission, by the miraculous works of God; and it is evident that the existence of a Deity must have been antecedently allowed, and some general notions of his natural and moral governments admitted by those to whom he addressed himself.

Here, then, let us pause, and admire the wisdom of the Divine dispensations, as they were accommodated to the different conditions of mankind. There is great reason to believe that the existence of a Deity was not at first reasoned out by the unaided faculties of men, and even they who now argue from the effects to an intelligent cause, received their first notions of that cause from education, and by laborious reflection have converted a prejudice into a rational conviction. A most subtle and determined advocate for infidelity has not only confessed, but endeavoured to prove, that polytheism would be the most natural religion of men; and, by this very attempt, he has furnished a strong argument for the expediency, and I will add the probability, of a revelation respecting the Divine unity. This probability is farther confirmed by the testimony of sacred history, where we are informed that in the infancy of the world God vouchsafed repeated communications concerning himself, his will, and his works. In the very first ages, revelation was requisite to convey the knowledge of one supreme Governor, and in succeeding generations it

was equally necessary to perpetuate the belief of the same truth. If, indeed, we consider the disadvantageous circumstances of mankind in these earlier times, the grossness of their manners, the fierceness of their passions, the scantiness of their attainments, the little proficiency they made in arts, and their total ignorance of science, we shall, upon general principles, be utterly unable to explain how persons who were so like or so inferior to their fellow-creatures in other respects, should be so unlike and superior to them in the possession of this great and interesting doctrine. In later times, when the reason of men, most vigorously employed upon other subjects, was most wretchedly depraved on those of theology, it has pleased God to close the series of his revelations by the promulgation of a law inculcating such precepts as are highly beneficial to mankind in the most refined state of society, and supported by such evidences as are admirably suited to the genius of the religion itself, and the pretensions of its author. And if we reflect on the condition of the world when that law was published, we shall be at a loss to account for its triumphs over the stubbornness of prejudice and the fury of persecution, unless the supernatural causes assigned for its success had a real and unequivocal operation.

To conclude. Christianity, we may boast, has enabled men to carry the arts of civilization to the summit of excellence; it has enlarged the circle of human knowledge; it has produced those just habits of thinking in religious topics, which have

been easily and successfully transferred to other inquiries; it has eventually called off the philosopher from visionary researches to experimental science, and has taught the religionist to found his faith upon reason, and his hope upon the practice of solid virtue. But, unhappily for mankind, we are prone to forget the source of all our advantages in proportion to their magnitude and their utility; and hence it happens that many among us, who abundantly enjoy those religious blessings which the providence of God has now made ordinary, become ungratefully indifferent, or obstinately incredulous, to those extraordinary measures by which the Gospel was introduced and propagated. Let not, however, such guilt, my brethren, be laid to your charge. If you look back to antiquity, you will find that as men, from their ignorance or their depravity, are less capable of attending to the internal beauty of religion, God has been pleased to call up their attention by the most striking external proofs of its truth. If you reflect seriously on the present state of the world, on our principles of speculation and of practice, on our rapid progress in philosophy, and our refinements in social life, you will not think miracles wantonly lavished, when the very improvements which now render a miraculous interposition unnecessary, are themselves the effects of a dispensation professedly and eminently miraculous.

97220

SERMON VI.*

THE HOUSE OF PRAYER.

MATTHEW xxi. 13.

And he said unto them, it is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer.

THE general, or, perhaps, as I ought rather to say, the almost universal consent of mankind has been frequently insisted upon by sagacious and pious religionists in their controversy with the subtle sceptic and the stubborn infidel; most assuredly that consent forms a decisive proof upon the adaptation of the human mind to admit and retain the belief of some divine agency. It constitutes in itself a moral probability of the highest order in favour of Theism, and in regard to the common apprehensions of our fellow-creatures, it supplies the place or facilitates the reception of those elaborate and abstruse reasonings by which the existence of a Deity has been successfully demonstrated. If we pass from the latent opinions of men to their visible actions, here also in their general practice we find many vestiges of general resemblance; for the very

* August 1816.

notion of a Being, by which all external objects are created and preserved, is nearly in all instances attended by the desire of His favour, by the dread of His disapprobation, and by the consciousness of our unalterable and immediate dependence upon His protection.

This consciousness operates under various forms of hope, veneration, and gratitude; and by that original structure of the mind, which induces us to express the inward suggestions of our souls in outward signs of gesture or words, we are naturally led to address ourselves to the Deity, sometimes in humble request, and sometimes in fervent thanksgiving. When the lightnings glare, when the thunder rolls, when elemental war rages through the vaulted sky, when the foundations of the great depths of the sea are thrown open by the fury of the tempest, and when the earth itself is shaken to its centre, man shrinks and shudders under a sense of his own utter weakness; he is roused by the very activity of natural causes to look out for some distinct and controling cause. He is overwhelmed with the conception of some invisible agent beyond himself, and above himself; he falls prostrate before that Being who sits enthroned in the heavens; he raises the suppliant eye, and in accents faltering at one moment, and eager at the next, he pours forth his prayer for deliverance from visible and impending danger.

But not only in the dreadful convulsions of nature do we recognize a God: the fragrant flower, the verdant meadow, the waving harvest, the stately

forest, the refreshing gale, the sweet music of the groves on the arrival of the morning dawn, the soothing serenity which accompanies evening twilight, the sun resplendent in his meridian glory, the moon arrayed in her full-orbed lustre, and the firmament spangled with stars innumerable—all these objects impress us with a sense of beauty combined with utility, and of endless variety regulated by consummate order—they carry up the judgment, the imagination, the affections of the beholder to their Divine Author, and as they strike him one while with the awful majesty of omnipotence, and another with the milder character of benevolence, he cannot fail to exclaim, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth, the heaven, and the universe are full of thy riches. But what is man, that thou so regardest him? Made him thou hast little lower than the angels," and yet thou "crownest him with honour and worship?" "Praise the Lord therefore, O my soul, and all that is within me magnify his holy name." If such be the effect wrought upon us in our more abstract contemplation on the scenery of nature, what do we experience while we reflect on the relation of things to our own personal well-being? When the "latter and the former rains descend" in soft drops upon the earth, and the "vallies stand so thick with corn as to laugh and sing," we perceive an agency far transcending all the contrivances of human wisdom, and all the exertions of human strength. Our hearts glow with gladness, and our voices are raised

in songs of praise. Such is the connection between our thoughts and our actions.

And if we trace the influence of religion among the barbarous or more enlightened nations of the earth, here too we shall discern the beneficial effects of that sympathy which pervades all the more arduous duties, and all the more precious interests of the social state. Whatsoever man feels and expresses when communing with his own heart, he feels more exquisitely, and expresses more energetically, in the presence of his fellow-creatures. Hence it is that even in the rudest forms of communities particular places soon began to be chosen, and when chosen to be reverenced, and when reverenced to be frequented, for the performance of religious rites. It might be a rude and rugged altar—it might be a gloomy grove—it might be an obscure corner—it might be a barren hill—it might be a small and uncouth edifice, but it was a place of worship. Whether too, according to the popular faith of any nation, there be one deity or more; whether in the conception of such a being our minds be delighted by the view of his inexhaustible goodness, or alarmed by a sense of his irresistible power, we see the necessity of doing homage to these attributes, and we have a kind of instinctive feeling that our supplications will not be ineffectual, when they are expressed in reverential language, when they are accompanied by the united hearts and united voices of numbers, and when they are uttered in those places which are peculiarly dedicated to religion.

Thus it appears that in reference to the convictions and customs of men, whether we survey them in perfect or imperfect stages of civilization, the house of their God is a house of prayer. And this general position will be seen with increased clearness and increased usefulness, if we examine the respect which it bears to the Jewish Temple, of which our Lord was speaking in the words of the text.

No principles of philosophy can be more profound or more comprehensive—no language of eloquence or poetry can be more sublime—no scenery presented to the imagination can be more vivid—no appeal made to the heart can be more interesting, than those which we read in the words of Solomon upon the dedication of the temple. They command alike the assent of the sage and the admiration of the religionist; and whether we view them under the aspect of beauty or precision, in the charms by which they captivate our affections, or in the rules which they prescribe for our devotions, they throw open to us in the widest extent, and in the brightest colours, the importance of our Lord's declaration, that the "house of Jehovah is a house of prayer." Mark then, I beseech you, the earnestness and the wisdom with which Solomon has provided for every present and future want, for every private and public interest, every duty of individuals to individuals, of citizens to their countrymen, and of all to their God. "Have respect," saith he, "unto the supplication of thy servant, O Lord my God, that thy eyes may be opened upon this house day and night. If a man sin against his

neighbour, and come before thine altar, requite thou them by recompensing his way upon his own head, and justify thou the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness. If thy people be put to the worst before the enemy, and pray before thee in this house, bring them again into the land which thou gavest them and their fathers. When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, if they pray towards this place, pardon the sins of thy servants, and send rain upon the land given by thyself unto thine own people for thine inheritance. If there be death—if there be pestilence—if there be blasting or mildew, or locusts or caterpillars—if enemies besiege—whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness there be, then, what prayer shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, hear thou from thy dwelling-place, and forgive—even concerning the stranger, if for thy great name's sake he cometh into this house, hear according to all that he calleth to thee for, that all the people of the earth may know thy name, and may fear thee as doth thy people Israel, and may know that the house which I have built is called by thy name. If thy people go to war against their enemies, hear from heaven their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over, carried away captives, yet, if they bethink themselves in the land of their captivity, and return to thee with all their heart, hear thou them from thy dwelling-place, and maintain their right, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee."

Such was the language of Solomon, when he consecrated that temple which your Redeemer has pronounced to be the House of Prayer; and, by so calling it, has sanctioned the creed and the practice of its founder. And can you hear such words, consecrated by such authority, without charity for the errors of those who instruct you to pray not for temporal blessings, whether they adorn the mind or support the body, as if they were never worthy the serious regard from a Christian, but spiritual only? Do you enjoy the blessings of peace, or suffer the calamities of war—do you feel the freshness of health or the languor of sickness—are your spirits elevated by the blandishments of prosperity, or weighed down by the pressure of adversity—are you cheered amidst the goodly appearances of an abundant harvest, or are we dismayed by the gloomy prospect of approaching dearth—into all these situations you may be thrown by the will of your Maker;—in all of them the language of Solomon will furnish you with the most appropriate and most impressive terms of supplication; and his example, as well as his instruction, points out to you the sanctuary as that place where these supplications may be very properly addressed to an omnipotent and omniscient Preserver.

The philosopher, indeed, may say, but Solomon, you must remember, has anticipated him in saying, "Behold, Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain thee! How much less this house that I have built?" Yet if that philosopher turns from the immensity of the Deity to the limited powers of man, he must

perceive that, by the constitution of our nature, and by those laws of association which God hath authorized for connecting the operations of our senses with the exercise of our moral and intellectual faculties, places chosen for the service of our Maker afford very powerful aid in rendering to Him that worship which seems most adapted to his perfections. He must perceive that in the heathen world curiosity, or reverence, or admiration, or gratitude, must have been excited by traditions long and generally believed, of some such events which occurred near the sacred spot, and which the sacred building itself was intended to commemorate. He must perceive that, even in Christian countries, antiquity gives additional dignity to the temple as well as the palace;—that, according to the well-known influence which philosophy assigns to contiguity and resemblance, we with increased satisfaction bow the knee where our fathers in their days, and our progenitors in the old times before them, worshipped their Creator;—that the virtues practised by them, or the mercies granted to them, are endeared to us by a view of the same place where their virtues were invigorated and their blessings implored;—that the sanctity assigned to religious offices by laws, and that long-continued consent of large communities, which at least is equivalent to the choice of individuals, heightens their importance;—that the exclusion of all common cares, and all trifling amusements, prepares the mind for serious meditation; and that the correspondent feelings, postures, tones, and words of those around us, impart fresh firmness to our faith, fresh ardour to

our hope, and fresh earnestness to our devotion. We read, indeed, in a poet of antiquity, and in a celebrated writer of our own country, that men wantoning in paradox may speak of the hill and grove as a group of trees, and of the hallowed temple as a heap of stones. But these acute observers of the human mind have not failed to remind us, that short is the transition from the dreams of the visionary to the ravings of the scorner, and that they who triumphantly harangue in a jargon so opposite to the good sense of mankind, are prepared to explain away the properties and principles of virtue itself, as an assemblage of specious and unsubstantial words.

You, my brethren, are conscious of now being assembled in the House of God. You are accustomed to hear there instructive discourses on the revealed word of God. You are taught to look upon it as an essential part of your duty there to offer up supplications and thanksgivings before the throne of God. There you judge, and there you act, in conformity to those sentiments which nature has implanted in your bosoms; and which in various ages, under various aspects, have manifested themselves in the expressions of your reliance upon the Deity, and your obligations to him for every blessing to yourselves and to your fellow-creatures. Much, therefore, it is to be lamented that, among some misguided brethren, who profess a very uncommon degree of zeal for the controversial doctrines of our church, such an undue stress should be laid on sermons; not, I grant to the entire ex-

clusion of prayer, but with a marked preference to it. Rightly understood, and rightly performed, both are, I allow, very proper instruments for our spiritual edification. But if their comparative importance should ever become a matter of discussion, the superiority of claim must be due to prayer; due to that in which every man can join; due to that in which every man can deplore his own sins, explain his own wants, and acknowledge the mercies conferred on himself.

Now prayer, as prepared for us by the well-weighed counsels and well-directed co-operation of wise and pious men, brings immediately before us, not the peculiar tenets of this or that favourite church, or this or that idolized preacher, but the attributes of our God. Sermons contain the language of man addressed to man—the language of individuals more or less enlightened, and more or less discreet—the language, perhaps, of good meaning, unassisted at the moment by good sense—the language of preachers more earnest to persuade than skilful to interest; and therefore language not always corrected by laborious effort, nor always purified by calm and intense meditation. All men are commanded to pray. In the exhortation which stands at the opening of our morning and evening service, and which the people are instructed to hear attentively, but not to read, there may be found a compression of matter and a justness of thinking, which, from frequent recurrence, may in some degree escape your notice, but which every intelligent pastor ought to point out occasionally to every serious congregation. You

are there represented as assembling to "render thanks for the great benefits" which you have received at the hands of your Maker, to "set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy word, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul." Now, from what writings of antient sages, or modern religionists, can the objector produce a passage in which the various duties of devotion—at once satisfactory to the learned and profitable to the unlearned—are selected more judiciously, brought together more fully, or stated in a manner more luminous or more impressive? Doubtless you are called upon to hear the word of God, and presumed it is that they who expound it to you are qualified for their office by accuracy of knowledge and purity of faith. But are you not also directed to "render thanks for the great benefits which God has bestowed upon you?" Yet persons there are who, as I told you, assign little or no merit to all the acknowledgments of dependence, and all the effusions of gratitude, to which you are impelled, as creatures conscious of being indebted to the Deity for the refreshing air you breathe—for the invigorating health you enjoy—for the bodily strength which sustains you in procuring support to yourselves and your families—for the intellectual faculties which enable you to contemplate the works of nature as the effects of an omniscient and omnipotent cause, ever operating in your favour—for the opportunities you have to cultivate the useful and ornamental arts of civilized life; and for the salutary influence of re-

flection, not only in purifying the gratifications of our grosser senses, but exalting them almost into virtues by the salutary discipline of temperance and chastity, and the amiable endearments of social intercourse. Avowedly slighting all these objects, and indirectly condemning our attention to them, the Evangelical Christian would confine your petitions to certain spiritual graces, which he describes as the privileges of the regenerate, and therefore denied to innumerable multitudes of moral agents, past, present, and to come, who, like you and me, suppose themselves candidates for immortality—some from the attributes of the Deity, as discernible by the light of natural religion, and others from his mercy, as covenanted to us by the authority of Revelation. But, in opposition to the fantastic and unscriptural tenets of these illuminated teachers, let me remind you that the Founders of our Church include all the benefits granted to us from above, under the general and just appellation of "great;" and that they expect you to look up to God, as the giver of that which is requisite for your present welfare, as well as that which is necessary for your future salvation. Deeply impressed with this fact, I resume the subject, which, as I explained to you, is become highly interesting by the peculiar occurrences of our own times.

My objection to the tenets of these self-appointed, and perhaps self-deluded reformers, is, that they have a tendency to make you impassioned hearers, rather than devout worshippers. I do not, indeed,

impute to them the total disuse, but I do censure them for the negligent use, of public prayer. Let us, then, for a moment, suppose that the sympathies which warm our bosoms in acts of personal devotion, performed among numbers, were not called into action, and that we were under the strongest feelings which are usually excited within us as hearers only.

If the House of God were not a house of prayer, but a house for instruction solely, you might have the advantage of receiving it from a preacher earnest in his delivery, sound in his doctrines, acute in his arguments, judicious in his topics, perspicuous in his statements, and in his style sometimes elegant, often energetic, and always correct. Your understandings might be enlightened, your faith might be confirmed, your piety might in some degree be exercised. Can you perform all duties of worship so well, while you are listening to a favourite minister, as you might do if, with a penitent heart and humble voice, you were immediately engaged in direct and continued addresses to Heaven, and thanksgivings to your Maker? After leaving the sanctuary, and reflecting upon what had been not done, as well as what had been done, while you were in it, would you be quite satisfied if, prostrate before the Searcher of all hearts, you had not with your own lips lamented your own sins, acknowledged your own wants, and set forth the most worthy praise of that God who again and again had supplied them abundantly?

I do not mean to misrepresent the meaning of other men, and I wish not to have my own misunderstood. I have no desire to depreciate the usefulness of preaching; but it is my duty not to let the advantages of it be thought superior to those of prayer, uttered, I mean, in the spirit, and with the matter, according to which every member of the Established Church has every necessary aid and every proper encouragement to pray.

Let prayer be done well, and let not preaching be left undone. Prayer, doubtless, may produce that seriousness which prepares you for receiving instruction—that instruction too itself will be understood more readily, and felt more deeply, when it relates to the supplications and the thanksgivings which, together with your fellow Christians, you have just before offered up to the Throne of Heaven —to the offences which on your bended knees you have just now confessed, to the forgiveness which you have implored, to the succour which you have asked, to the mercies which you have thankfully acknowledged. The preparatory efficacy of public prayer is indeed wholly admitted, even by those evangelical preachers, who deliver forms composed by themselves before the sermon. But the difference between their hearers and the worshippers in the Church lies here: during the discourse, a hearer may be irresistibly drawn aside from the subject by the rapturous admiration of the ingenuity and eloquence displayed by the preacher. But in seasons of prayer, with the members of our Church, he remembers not, he inquires not, he cares not, by

whom this or that formulary was provided for his use, he regards only the propriety of the thoughts and the solemnity of his words; he is conscious of his own duty to adopt those thoughts, and to respect those words; and, actuated by the example of the fellow-worshippers who surround him, he adds earnestness to sincerity. He acts from himself—for himself; and he is protected from the ignorance or errors of the minister by the weighty contents of the Liturgy, intended for the benefit of himself and his pious associates.

Amidst the occupations and pleasures of the world, preaching is indispensably necessary for the generality of mankind, who have few other opportunities for acquiring religious knowledge. But let not the Gospel itself be confounded with interpretation. Let not the preacher claim to himself that regard and that submission which are due only to Christ and his inspired followers. Let not preaching be considered as the most vital part of our duty in the sanctuary; nor let it be supposed that, by hearing ever so attentively, or believing ever so firmly, we can expiate, I do not say the total disuse, but, I am compelled once more to say, the negligent use of prayer. I state the plain fact; and yet I am aware that the teacher and the hearer are wily enough to disclaim the principle, while no sensible and impartial observer of their gestures, their countenance, their words, and their actions, can for a moment mistake their real predilection for the sermon, in which certain favourite notions are extolled by the illuminated champion of faith and

grace, and defended against the ignorant and presumptuous advocate for good works, and therefore the unholy assailant of vital Christianity.

Upon these distinctions and these cautions I am led, by the unusual and portentous aspect of these eventful times, to insist the more earnestly, because it is notorious that, in those parts of our worship which precede the sermon, and which certainly are not of unequal usefulness, teachers of a certain class read the established forms of devotion with little sensibility, and their hearers neither give, nor are encouraged to give, much attention. Now we are told that in the time of Chrysostom there was a popular proverb, "better the sun should not shine than Chrysostom should not preach." But this celebrated teacher did not suffer his vanity to delude his understanding or to slacken his devotion. He did not, like the Pharisees of old, affect to be called Rab, Rabbi, Rabboni; nor, like boasters in later ages, did he arrogate to himself peculiar and extraordinary aids for the knowledge of truths which other men could not discuss, or the display of piety which other men could not attain; on the contrary, he was afflicted to observe that the people were more ready to listen to his sermon than to the word of God himself. To the authority of Chrysostom let me add the example of Calvin himself. He certainly did not undervalue the importance of his own opinions, or the extent of his own abilities to defend and inculcate them, and yet, rescued for the moment by genuine good sense from chimerical theory and polemical dogmatism, he, in reference

to the text, represented prayer as the nobler part of Christian worship, when he expressly describes "the House of God" as "the House," not of preaching, but "of prayer."

But further, and on my part, I must confess that, in the choice of subjects, as well as in the manner of treating them, I have many painful recollections, and many alarming anticipations, when I look to the teachers who set so high an estimation on their sermons delivered by themselves. It has, indeed, ever been my anxious wish, that controversial discourses should be employed only before hearers who are furnished with ample stores of classical or philosophical knowledge: who are habitually practised in balancing probabilities, historical and moral; who are accustomed to explore the motives and consequences of human action under the various modifications of customs, laws, climates and religion; and who have carefully examined the most judicious theories on the structure of the human mind.

It is my firm conviction also, that before every mixed or unlearned audience, the plain duties of temperance, modesty, diligence, resignation, honesty, veracity, humility, placability and piety, illustrated again and again by the dignified phraseology of Scripture, and enforced by the awful sanctions of future rewards and punishments, as prepared by that Being who "spake, as never man spake," are more proper for the pulpit than topics known under the technical terms of consubstantiability specific and numerical, hypostatic union, eternal filiation, eternal procession, actual regeneration by

special grace, possible justification by faith only, supralapsarianism and sublapsarianism, and other phrases familiar, I grant, to the polemic, dear to the bigot, and animating to the multitude, but uncouth to the ear and unedifying to the heart of many well-informed and well-disposed Christians. "The Temple of the Lord," said the Jews, as we read in Jeremiah, "the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these." In the same spirit do some of our contemporaries exclaim, "The Gospel, the Gospel, the Gospel of Jesus is here, and here only." Perhaps, my brethren, it were unkind and uncourteous to apply to these misguided declaimers those indignant terms, in which Jeremiah speaks of his countrymen, "Trust not in lying words." But I cannot be charged with indecorum or harshness, when I recommend to these accusers of my ecclesiastical brethren a little more charity to their fellow-Christians, and a little more distrust in themselves; and much more discipline from knowledge, as the corrective of headstrong zeal and frantic enthusiasm.

Far be it from me to invade the sacred rights of toleration, which leaves every man who considers himself a Christian to the guidance of conscience in the profession of religious doctrines, and the adoption of religious ceremonies. I mean, therefore, not to censure any individuals, in any class of believers who are without the pale of the national establishment. But I confess myself dissatisfied, and even terrified, when I find that discourses from our own pulpits are permitted to gain

such an ascendancy over the minds of men, in a Church where, like our own, "the House of God" is, really and professedly, a "House of Prayer."

In the course of gradual changes that were made to furnish the people of this country with materials for worship, after their separation from the Church of Rome, our service now stands before you in its fifteenth stage of excellence. From time to time it has been enlarged or amended by the labours of the best educated scholars and the best informed theologians. It has been enriched with the choicest stores which could be found in the public services of the Church of Rome, the Church of Greece, and some foreign Protestant Churches, or in the writings of the most learned and eloquent Fathers. To the discerning critic it constitutes, like the Bible, a work in which the most valuable properties of the language itself are preserved; and to the sincere believer it presents almost every topic which can exercise his faith or interest his affections. Possible, indeed, it is, nay, probable, that after the acknowledged improvements of the human mind in criticism and ethics, retrenchment or correction might in some few instances be introduced—not, I grant, by the recluse, who passionately clings to expressions which are obscured by long disuse, and into which antiquity cannot infuse the charms of mellowness or dignity—not by the sciolist, who is suddenly fascinated by words which are dainty and neoteric—not by the blustering and perhaps mercenary gladiator in theology—not by the morose bigot—not by the impetuous zealot—not by the airy

latitudinarian—but by sober and impartial observers of times and seasons, who bring to the task of revisal moderation without lukewarmness, erudition without pedantry, diligence without officiousness, and accuracy without fastidiousness. Instead of repining, however, at that which we have not, let us gratefully acknowledge and honestly use that which, by the good Providence of God, we already have. For it is a service in which the monarch and the subject, the sage and the peasant, will meet with many clear directions for belief, many powerful aids to repentance for sin, many lively encouragements to perseverance in righteousness, many soothing consolations in seasons of sickness and sorrow, and many preparatory topics of meditation for the awful hour of death.

Whatsoever may be the grounds for dissent among our Protestant brethren, whatever the latent and remote views of some of those who are more nearly connected with us in the censures which they scatter on the general body of our clergy, and in the encomiums which they heap upon evangelical teachers; there are, in our Prayer-Book, some striking properties, which they who use it cannot estimate too highly, and which they who use it not would do well to imitate. There can be found no arrogant claims to superiority in soundness of faith or sincerity of piety over other religious churches. There you meet with no contemptuous and acrimonious invectives levelled against the real or supposed errors of other Christian communities. And never let it be forgotten by the learned and candid pastor, that one

solitary and severe reproach, which in an age of recent and angry controversy had been directed against the Bishop of Rome in the rubric of Edward the Sixth, was wisely and virtuously omitted by the excellent men who restored, and, I add, improved our service in the reign of Elizabeth.

Whatsoever may be the petulant raillery or the plausible sophistry of some zealots, who appear to me veterans indeed in the artifices of misrepresentation, but noviciates in the sciences of history, criticism, and theology, the Church of England, which provides for you "a House of God," though established by the laws of England, does not derive from them the arrangement of its ritual or the materials of its creeds, or the principles of its articles, or the phraseology of its devotional offices. It has not, therefore, ceased to be the Church of Christ, because, in one sense of the expression, it is the religion of the State, and God forbid that it should ever imbibe the spirit of its opponents by maintaining, or even insinuating, that any class of believers who do not conform to the religion which the legislature approves, have therefore apostatized from the Church of Christ; or that any "House of Prayer" which employs ceremonies and avows tenets different from our own, is therefore not "the House of God."

Of those persons who repeat the formulary which bears the name of the Apostles' Creed, let me dispassionately ask, what they mean when they speak of the "Catholic Church" of Christ? Do they not mean, that, as an universal Church, it has many

members, and that all are included under that appellation who hold in common that the gospel professed by all is the infallible and inspired Word of God?

To those members of the Church who do not sufficiently regard what is done during the season of prayer, and who precipitately censure what is usually taught from the pulpit, let me propose one plain question. At the opening of a long and most interesting series of petitions in the Litany, on the close of which every individual is supposed to beseech that a "good Lord would hear us;" what, my brethren, is passing in their minds when they join us in praying, or know that we have prayed, that God would keep and govern "the Church universal in the right way?" Do they imagine that "universal" is equivalent to "particular" exclusively? Do they not suppose the Church of England to be one part of a whole, which includes many other parts? Do they not supplicate the aid and guidance of God, that every part, however distinguished from other parts by external denomination or external discipline, may be kept in the right way; and that the right way is not incompatible with many and wide differences upon abstruse questions and in arbitrary institutions?

If then every sect be, as in reality it is, a part of the Catholic Church, and if the Catholic Church be, as in reality it is, the Church of Christ, surely the Church of England is not entirely destitute of a claim to the appellation, when it directs you to pray, that "all who calls themselves Christians may be led

into the way of truth," and that all may "hold the faith," not in exact similarity of speculative opinions or ritual observances, but in points far more attainable and more important, "in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." He who thus manifests his belief in a crucified Saviour, will be excused, not from fallibility, indeed, but from wickedness. He that holds the faith with a disposition not peaceable, and with habits not righteous, may escape from many miseries, but will be guilty of many sins.

But not yet have I exhausted the reasons for which I differ from certain modern panegyrists on the superior pretensions of public preaching to public prayer. From a sort of inattention to difference of circumstances in the moral world, which I should think venial if it were not mingled with uncharitableness, officiousness, and spiritual pride, much stress has been laid on the practice of the Apostles as preachers. They, my brethren, were to disseminate the truths of a new religion. They were to proclaim and to verify those mysteries or secrets in the counsels of God, which included the admission of the Gentiles into the religion of Christ. They were to contend with corruptions of the heathen idolater, and the prejudices of the Jewish zealot. It was incumbent upon them to endure toil now unnecessary, to encounter perils now unknown, when they instructed their converts upon the miracles wrought by Christ, upon the precepts laid down by him, upon the sanctions of a future state prepared by him, upon his spotless life, upon his meri-

torious death, upon his wonderful Resurrection, upon his glorious Assension, and upon his sacred office as the appointed Judge of the living and the dead. All these doctrines were unrevealed before; many of them were unwelcome when revealed; none of them could be widely diffused, nor effectually inculcated, without exertions which owed part of their success to the miraculous power with which the Apostles were occasionally furnished; and yet preaching was not the only duty to which even they were called by their Master. Did not Peter and John go up into the temple at the hour of prayer, even when a miracle was to be granted in favour of the man who asked for alms? After the preaching of Peter, do we not read that his followers continued stedfastly in breaking of bread and in prayer, and were daily with one accord in the temple praising God? St. Paul, not while he taught but while he prayed in the temple, fell into a trance. During the whole of the time the Apostles continued in Jerusalem, "the House of God was" to them "the House of Prayer;" and afterwards, when they assembled in private houses—the only sanctuary in which they could then meet, plain it is, that "by supplications with thanksgivings they made their requests known unto God."—I bring these facts back to your recollection, not in order to depreciate the utility of religious instruction, but to convince you, that it is entitled only to a secondary part when compared with religious worship.

Listen to your teacher, but pray for yourselves. Examine your own hearts—review your own ac-

tions—ask relief for your own wants, and forgiveness of your own sins—acknowledge in the sanctuary with your own lips every solicited, and every unsolicited mercy which you have experienced—enter it as the place where man, fallible man, is to be heard as the expositor of the Gospel. But when an All-wise, Almighty, All-merciful God is himself to be directly adored, believe, if your conscience so directs, the doctrines which Cephas inculcates—frequent, if you please, the temple in which Cephas is the preacher; but do not, from the pulpit or the press, loudly and incessantly proclaim to the ignorant, the credulous, and the censorious, that Apollos, and those who think with Apollos, do not sincerely believe the Gospel, do not seriously study it, do not clearly understand it, do not profoundly reverence it, do not mean, as the followers of Cephas do, to worship God faithfully—are not qualified, as the followers of Cephas are, to comprehend the precious truths revealed by Jesus—are not worthy, as the followers of Cephas are, to be partakers of his most gracious promises.

My brethren, in looking into that sacred Volume which is to regulate your faith and to animate your hope, you will find numerous instances in which your Redeemer is represented, not only as the teacher of the purest and most salutary doctrines, but as an example most worthy of your imitation in private and public devotion. More particularly you will remember, that he has vouchsafed to instruct us in a form of supplication, the importance of which I shall, in the conclusion of this discourse

endeavour to impress upon your minds by explanatory remarks not wholly undeserving, I trust, of your serious attention.

"The House of God," as Christ here tells you, is "the House of Prayer." And how can you expect to pray more becomingly or more effectually than by understanding and adopting the words which Christ has set before us? It is a very striking fact, that in the heathen world men expressed their piety, not so much by prayer as by thanksgiving. In their addresses to the deities they speak sometimes of useful discoveries made by those deities, for the ordinary concerns of life in the cultivation of the earth, or in the application of iron and other materials, as instruments for the arts of peace; and sometimes they boast of signal discoveries granted to them in war. Among the Jews, as has been fully shewn by our learned men, praise formed a much larger part of the public worship than prayer. For this difference it may not be very difficult to account, if we attend to the operations of the human mind. The very act of thanksgiving is delightful to us: it relates to the past; it exhibits to us some definite subject, included in the experience of our forefathers or ourselves. It connects to our judgments the present with the past, by realizing to our minds a continued series of effects; some of which are now emanating from causes remote, perhaps, in their origin, but favourable to our happiness. On the other hand, prayer points to the future, to that which may be distant, to that which is uncertain. It extends through the whole range

of our possible as well as actual wants; and the objects of it, from their number and diffusion, often become indistinct. We look moreover for the accomplishment of our wishes to causes imperfectly known. We negligently throw ourselves upon contingencies, which we call chance, for deliverance from what we fear or the attainment of what we desire. Perhaps, too, there is now and then a latent delusion which draws aside our attention from the agency of God, and leads us to repose undue confidence in the wisdom of our own contrivances, on the exertions of our own might.

But whatever may be the degree in which any, or all, of these causes influenced the Jews, it is well known that their forms of supplications were not numerous. John, therefore, the precursor of Christ, endeavoured to supply what he thought a defect, and accordingly he instructed his immediate followers to pray more frequently. Hence, as we learn from St. Luke, the disciples of Christ were strongly impressed by the novelty of the fact, and, therefore, they said to him, "Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." This request was made by our Saviour, not when he was teaching, but when he was himself praying. And replete with wisdom was his answer. "When ye pray, say, "Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth; give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from

evil." In Matthew vi. the same instructions in substance are given upon a different occasion. Our Lord, in the course of his sermon reproves the ostentation of the Pharisees, both in their moral and religious duties. "When thou doest alms," let them be secret—"when thou prayest," thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for "they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men"—but when thou prayest, "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret"—"when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye, therefore, like unto them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him—after this manner, therefore, pray ye." And then follow words equivalent to those which I just now produced from St. Luke.

Here we are taught what to avoid as well as what we are to practise. We are to avoid all public displays of piety, with a view to the admiration of men. We are to avoid vain repetitions, such as the heathens used; and of that we have an instance in the priests of Baal, who cried aloud from morning until noon, and from mid-day until the offering of the evening sacrifice—"O Baal, hear us." We have other instances of babbling in some Greek hymns addressed to heathen divinities, in which, with profuse adulation, all the exaggerated epithets which tradition of greater or less antiquity had accumulated, or poetry invented, are introduced

in pompous array, and with imagery obscure and extravagant.

From the power of compound words, of obsolete epithets, of sonorous versification, and recondite or remote allusions, they may sometimes gratify curiosity, they may exercise criticism, they may dazzle the imagination, but they rarely satisfy the judgment, and they never pierce the heart. Properties not very definitive, and especially that polyonomy, or elaborate and ambitious groupe of splendid titles which the mythologists, poets, and priests in the heathen world supposed very acceptable to their deities, may be found in the Christian hymns of Synesius—a man to whom I cannot refuse the praise of genius and piety. But, in his writings, genius is led astray by a vitiated taste; piety rushes headlong into rampant fanaticism. The bold outlines of lyric poetry are defaced by uncouth masses upon the quarry of a metaphysical vocabulary, half heathenish and half Christian, and in the spirit of subtilized but spurious Platonism, seem to hover nearly over every delineation of every subject — over scriptural narrative tricked out with all the embroidery of romance, and scriptural doctrines disfigured by the hieroglyphics of mysticism. To men who are acquainted with the fierce and frivolous wranglings which for many centuries retarded the progress of civilization, gradually extinguished the light of science, and debased the purity of evangelical truth, among the bigotted disputants in the church of Constantinople, it will not be surprising that, even in our own days, the Greeks, who set up claims to

superior erudition, should expatiate with rapture on this once renowned hymnologist. But when a learned and judicious Protestant sits down to the perusal of Synesius, his sympathy is continually blunted by some exposition which he does not understand, and his devotion is checked by some dogma which he cannot believe. He will admit, that in the closet the wild and warm effusions of a philosophical devotee may sometimes amuse the learned reader; but he will be at a loss to conceive how in the sanctuary they can interest the serious inquirer, or can improve any sober-minded and well-principled congregation.

Deep therefore as may have been the researches, intense the feelings, and vivid the fancy of Synesius, his devotional works will not stand the test of comparison, with the simplicity, the energy, the majestic solemnity, the inartificial and irresistible pathos which characterize the writers of the Old Testament; when they set before us the name, the attributes, the righteous counsels, and mighty works of Jehovah, the Lord our God. Yet less instructive and less impressive do they appear when contrasted with the Lord's Prayer.

In order to give you clearer notions of its intrinsic merit, I have expatiated thus long on the senseless and fruitless babblings, unprofitable redundances, and disgusting impurities which our blessed Master meant to discourage when he instructed his disciples in what manner it became them to pray. "Do not use vain repetitions, nor think that ye shall be heard for your much speaking." My brethren, you will

cease to wonder at the caution here given to disciples, when I tell you that the word adoration is by some learned men supposed to allude to the custom of oriental nations, where the worshipper puts his hand before his mouth, lest one indecorous expression, one rash vow, one unwise or unholy word, should escape from his lips.

The writer of Ecclesiasticus has left us a short but significant injunction not to make much babbling when we pray. But the fullest and most energetic precept occurs in Ecclesiastes: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few."

But in the Scripture formulary of which I am speaking, the keenest sophists, and the fiercest adversary, can detect no traces of redundancies and imperfections, which the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes has justly condemned. Even they who dispute the evidences adduced in favour of Christianity, they who arraign the fitness of some doctrines said to be contained in it, they who depreciate its general usefulness to man in a social state, yet unanimously and unequivocally confess the unqualified excellence of this prayer. There, in reality, are no metaphysical refinements, no rhetorical embellishments, no whine of superstition, no rant of fanaticism. On the contrary, there is brevity without deficiency — there is variety without disorder — there is calmness without languor — there is simplicity without degrading imbecillity — there is serious-

ness without ostentatious solemnity—there is humility without slavish fear—there is trust in God, uncorrupted by pharisaical presumption: the unlearned may understand—the perverse can scarcely refuse to assent—the most enlightened to approve and sympathize—every member of the Church of England, the Church of Greece, the Church of Rome, and in every Protestant Church besides our own, the stubborn Jew, the haughty Mahommedan, the visionary Gentoo, the untutored Indian, every worshipper of every denomination in every region of the earth, acknowledges a Father in heaven; and therefore every one of them, with equal sincerity and equal propriety, may join with us in this prayer; while for the Christian is reserved the privilege of knowing distinctly, and remembering gratefully, by whom the contents of it were imparted, and upon whom the contents of it are explicitly and imperatively imposed.

Let then the barbarian, not assisted, as we have been, by a Divine instructor, call down the angry thunderbolt from his tutelary deity in the sanguinary conflicts of war, and express his thankfulness for victory in the rude carols of his progenitors, or shouts and savage exultation over a vanquished foe. We contemplate God as the gracious protector of all his creatures in the hour of danger, and the hour of peace. Let the churlish bigot view his master as confining his choicest gifts to those who repeat the same creed, and fall down before the same altar with himself, while the rest of mankind are the outcasts of heaven. We are convinced that, in every

nation, he who endeavours to work righteousness, according to the extent in which he is acquainted with the will of heaven will be accepted at the last day. Let the presumptuous Calvinist maintain, that the glories of immortality are reserved for those only whom God has arbitrarily elected, and to whom he vouchsafes those extraordinary and almost preternatural aids of grace and faith which are denied to the bulk of mankind. We, on the contrary, hold the more consolatory, and, I trust, the sounder doctrine, that God has made all his rational creatures for his own glory; that his glory consists not in the destruction, but the preservation of those who are under his moral government—not in the mystery of redemption, proffered to all, and intended only for a few—not in the exclusive preference of any sect, illuminated and regenerated by special assistance from above—but in the felicity of all those who, without any express distinction of religions, or any marked limitations of time and place, hallow the name of their Father in heaven, strive to do His will, and forgive the trespasses of their brethren, as they hope for their own to be forgiven. Such are the thoughts which rise in the breast of every reflecting man when he searches the principles contained in our Lord's Prayer; and, therefore, we ought to commend the wisdom and piety of the Church which has assigned a place to that prayer in the services of every morning and every evening, for the litany, in the communion, for baptism and marriage, for deliverance from the pain and peril of child-birth, and for the interment of those with

whom we hope to be summoned from the grave to appear before our common Redeemer and our common Judge.

Frequently has my bosom glowed with gratitude upon remembering the aid which, if, in discharging the most hallowed of all duties, I use it aright, will preserve me alike from being decoyed into improprieties by the latent sorcery of religious prejudice, and being precipitated into them by the strong impulse of religious feeling. Frequently and justly do other ministers confess the imperfection of their other petitions, before they begin to pronounce the words which our Lord has prescribed; and familiar as those words may be to our minds, yet, surely, you will learn to prize them more highly when you recollect that the difficulty of forming prayers adapted to a Christian audience is manifest in the repeated failures of experiments made by men whose habits of piety, whose rectitude of intention, and whose ingenuity, and even felicity, in other kinds of grave composition are indisputable, pre-eminent, and very meritorious. It has sometimes been my own lot to write discourses on subjects which required much circumspection from their importance, and much exertion from their magnitude; but my attempts to draw up prayer have been few; and never did I make them without wariness leading to diffidence, and diffidence gradually deepening into awe.

You, my brethren, have been taught to repeat the Lord's Prayer from your earliest youth to the present hour — you have been accustomed to use it in

the sanctuary and in your own private houses—you find comfort from it when you repose your heads on the pillow, and intreat God to watch over your slumbers—you are prepared by it for the duties of every revolving day, when going forth in the morning to your wonted labour you pronounced the sacred petition; occasionally in the course of those labours you recollect and you utter part of it, and thus invest the homely employments of the plough and the loom with the dignity and sanctity of a religious act. In future, then, let me intreat you to bear in mind one striking property, which the most unlettered among you may easily understand; and which the young and the old, the rich and the poor, would do well to treasure up in the most sacred recesses of their souls. "The Lord's Prayer," says a writer, equally distinguished by the depth of his researches, and the elegance of his style, "runs throughout in the plural number. We are instructed to say, 'Our Father, give us this day;' all these petitions are of universal extent and comprehension." "Should not this teach us," he continues, "that an enlarged, universal benevolence ought to accompany our religious addresses; and, indeed, to consider a little the plain reason of the thing—when can we so properly awaken in our souls a strong sense and conviction of an alliance to one another as beings of the same nature, as when we are in a more especial manner presenting ourselves before that great Being who is the common parent of our species?"

My brethren, do not the observations just now re-

cited to you exhibit in brighter colours the importance of those words which you have again and again uttered in this sanctuary and in your closets. Apply, therefore, each of you to your own hearts, and your own duty, what, for the purpose of illustrating and enforcing the foregoing remarks, I will now speak as in my own person for your own edification. Well, then, Christ has taught me to say, not my Father, but "our Father, which art in heaven." I ask not for myself only, but for my fellow-creatures; that he would this day give me bread for the coming morrow (as perhaps the original means), or as Solomon well expresses the same thought, "the food that is convenient for us." I implore from his mercy that forgiveness to their trespasses, of which I stand in urgent need for my own. I beseech him to deliver them, as well as myself, from the severe and perilous trials to which we are exposed in our spiritual warfare; and to guard us from the snares and assault of the evil adversary to our innocence, our peace, and our salvation.

Maker omnipotent! art not thou the righteous judge of all the earth? grant the supplication which I now most unfeignedly address to thee in the name of my gracious Redeemer, and in the behalf, not of myself only, but of those who now hear me, and many of whom, till they and I are summoned to our last solemn account, will see my face no more! Whensoever, in obedience to thy command, and for the promotion of thy glory, we are assembled in the "House of Prayer," may the precepts and the example of our blessed Lord be so present to our

minds as to regulate every thought and consecrate every word—may the love of man, whom we have seen, be intimately and inseparably blended with the love of God, whom we have not seen—may we pray at once with the understanding and the heart, for this is "the beauty of holiness"—may we offer to Thee the reasonable and most acceptable sacrifice of our unseemly prejudices, our untoward humours, our worldly appetites, and all the odious feelings and pernicious habits which defile our souls, from selfishness, pride, intolerance, envy, hatred, and malice, and every kind of uncharitableness. Finally, O heavenly Father, may we worship Thee, not as did the benighted heathen, or the sanctimonious Pharisees, with vehemence of gesticulation, loudness of voice, and multiplicity of words; but reverently, yet earnestly; joyfully, yet humbly; and, according to the emphatical and comprehensive language of thy well-beloved Son, "in spirit and in truth."

SERMON VII.*

ON THE DEATH OF GEORGE THE THIRD.

NUMBERS XXIII. 10.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

THESE words were spoken by Balaam, a corrupt, crafty, and avaricious prophet, when he had been repeatedly and importunately summoned by Balak, King of Moab, to curse the people of Israel; and when he had been impelled by the irresistible though unwelcome commands of the Deity, again and again, to bless them. They contain a solemn wish suggested by the voice of nature herfelf in the prospect of dissolution, or, I should rather say, a fervent ejaculation, arising from the circumstances in which Balaam was placed, when he saw, reluctantly but clearly, that the Almighty would extend his protection to that nation whom Balaam had been employed to devote to destruction. Whensoever they are heard in the sanctuary they seldom fail to rouse the most inconsiderate from their habitual lethargy,

---

* Feb. 1820.

and to awaken in the bosom of the pious the most serious reflections. But in other places also, and at other times, they more or less present themselves to the mind of every human being, who remembers that for his deeds, be they good or evil, he must render a strict account at the tribunal of Heaven. Do we see the remains of a fellow-creature whom we revered for his talents, or loved for his virtues, borne amidst the tears and the sighs of his friends to the silent and dreary grave? It is impossible for us not to pour out a short and earnest petition that our own end may be like his. Communing with our own hearts upon our humble but honest endeavours to perform the will of God, are we not induced to implore his aid for such perseverance in well-doing as may enable us to die the death of the righteous? If the remembrance of our past sins pierces our souls with remorse, do we not tremblingly dread the justice of God, and then supplicate his mercy, that, by resolutions and efforts of future amendment, we may be enabled to breathe our last in the humble and well-founded hope of final pardon?

Such, my brethren, is the efficacy of Balaam's words, according to the sense in which they are usually understood; and considered, no doubt, as general principles of morality, they must be allowed to have a tendency to dispose our hearts for meeting the hour of death and the day of judgment. It becomes me, however, as your spiritual instructor, to inform you that the real meaning of the text is very different from the import it bears, at first sight, among hearers who cannot have been much em-

ployed in criticism upon the phraseology of Sacred Writ; and therefore I will explain to you very fully what they signify, and what useful admonitions are involved in that signification.

Now a Christian readily supposes that they refer to the condition of a man in a world to come. But it is proper for me to tell you that we have no Scriptural evidence for believing that Balaam had any distinct notions of a future state; and I must add, that, if we grant him to have acquired such notions, the words of Balaam have little or no relation to the context. If we look into some subsequent part of Balaam's history, we shall see the clearest traces of those ideas which, upon his repeated views of the Israelites, predominated in his mind. "Behold," says he, in the 20th verse of the 23d chapter, "I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt. He hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob, what hath God wrought!" In this animated effusion Balaam alludes not to any recompence of the Israelites in another world, but to the glorious condition reserved for them in the present.

Turn we now to another passage, in which you will find the same train of thinking: "He hath

said which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open, how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar-trees beside the waters. He shall pour the water out of his bucket, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn; he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion; who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." Here you have no vestige of felicity in heaven, and surely such felicity, if it had occurred at all to the mind of Balaam, would have made a prominent figure in the description of the blessings to be conferred upon the people whom he had been desired to curse. The goodly tents of Jacob, the tabernacles of Israel, the exaltation of the kingdom of Israel, the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the strength of Israel like that of an unicorn, the posture of Israel like a great lion, whom no man would presume to stir up, set before us, in vivid imagery, a felicity that was merely temporal, and ascribe that felicity to the gracious appointment of God.

Let us now examine what was passing in the breast of Balaam when he spoke the words which I

have chosen for the text: "Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the East, saying, come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: Lo! the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his." If Balaam had said to Balak, God will in another world bless the nation of whom you are afraid, the king would have heard it with perfect indifference. But when Balaam enumerated the blessings God intended to confer upon them in this life, then the king's terrors were confirmed, then his wrath was kindled, then he smote his hands together, and exclaimed, "I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether." By the word righteous, commentators, especially Drusius and Bonfrerius, have generally agreed to understand the Israelites, and this interpretation would readily suggest itself to those who spoke the original language, for there is a strong similarity of sound in the two constituent words, of which Ishri, singular, denotes righteous, and Ishralim, plural, denotes the Israelites.* I am aware that Houbigant, Michaelis, and the author of Sepha Cosri, understand the text

* It has this meaning in Daniel, xi. 4.; Amos, iv. 2.; Psalm cix. 3.

as referring to a future state. But to the authority of these respectable writers may be opposed the opinion of other critics, not less distinguished by erudition and sagacity, and, let me add, of the antient Gomora—a word which implies perfection, and a work which is of the highest authority with the Jews, as containing a complete body of their laws. Bishop Patrick, who with his usual fairness produces both interpretations, evidently leans to that which I would adopt. "By the righteous," says this prelate, "he means Israel, who were a people free from idolatry, and he desires to be happy as they in another world,—*or*, that he may not die an immature and violent death, but enjoy such a long life here as was promised to the Israelites."

Let us now attend to the explanation given by Bishop Warburton: "This," says he, "is understood as a wish that Balaam might be a partaker with the righteous in another life. Had the apostate prophet said, let me live the life of the righteous, it would have had a much fairer claim for such a meaning. As it is, the force of the words, and their relation to the context, restrain us to this literal meaning: Let me die in a mature old age, after a life of health and peace, with all my posterity flourishing about me, as was the lot of the righteous observers of the law. This vain wish Moses, I suppose, recorded, that the subsequent account of his immature death (chap. xxxi. 8.) might make the stronger impression on the serious reader, to warn him against the folly and impiety of expecting the last reward of virtue for a life spent in the gratifi-

cation of every corrupt appetite." With a sort of slovenly and contemptuous air, the prelate tosses back the common interpretation to those who might chance to relish it—"but if any one will say the words have besides a sublimer meaning, I have no reason to contend with them." Here I must remark that, if the words really have an additional meaning, it seems to me strange that the more important signification should not be equally visible with the less; and, beyond all commentators, Bishop Warburton had very strong reasons to contend with such an explanation, because it would stand in direct opposition to his favourite hypothesis, that a future state had no place in the sanctions of that law by which the Israelites, of whom Balaam spoke, were to be governed. Such, therefore, could not be the meaning of Balaam; and yet, if the Bishop only meant to say that a Christian reader might add, as from himself, the sublimer meaning, I should have no reason to contend with him, while that meaning was understood to be subjoined by the operation of his own mind to the original sense.

The remark of Warburton on Balaam's foresight of the death which awaited himself deserves to be noticed, as it unfolds the weakness and deceitfulness of the human heart. Though Balaam, in his repeated interviews with Balak, was by the control of the Almighty restrained from gaining the wages of iniquity, yet the accursed passion of avarice still lurked in his bosom, and called again into action, by additional motives of resentment for his former disappointment, he afterwards executed his odious

purpose by prevailing on the Moabites to tempt the Israelites to idolatry, through the allurements of beautiful and corrupt women; and, when this injury was punished by the other uncorrupt part of their countrymen, Balaam fell in the same battle with the victims of his covetousness, his craftiness, and his mortified pride. It is conceivable, then, that Balaam might, at the moment, have an inward dread of the possibility that he should not die the death of the righteous; yet the wish to die as do the righteous could not be suppressed. He perhaps formed some imperfect resolution not to provoke the punishment which awaited him, if he persevered in his criminal purpose. He saw at the instant the danger of iniquity, and he desired to escape it. He saw the advantages of virtue, and poured forth a prayer to obtain them; but his heart was unsound; his avarice was unconquerable; he relapsed into guilt; he persisted in it; and he justly perished by the death, not of the righteous, but of the wicked.

I will now set before you the opinion of another celebrated prelate. "The words of the text," says Bishop Sherlock, "in their first and most natural sense, lead us to compare the wicked and the righteous, not only in their latest hours, but in the whole course and circumstances of their life. They arise from the contemplation of the happiness and prosperity of the people of Israel, and their future greatness and security in the land of promise, compared with the misery of the idolatrous nations given up to sin and superstition, and therefore

devoted to ruin. They, says the prophesyer, shall dwell alone, that is, apart from idolaters; and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. And in the next chapter when he looked on Amalek he took up his parable and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. These two places help to expound each other; for as the prophecy relating to Amalek was completed in the temporal destruction of that people, so by parity of reason, the prophecy concerning Israel imported the temporal happiness of that nation. It was denounced against Amalek that he should perish for ever, and leave no posterity behind him; but to Israel a long continuance of great increase is promised—who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" Sherlock, you see, has endeavoured as I did, to elucidate the text by other passages relating to the history of Balaam, and the instance which he adduces, supports the principle upon which my own reasoning rested.

I shall now advert to the second clause of the text upon which there is some diversity of opinion,—and let my last end be like his. The words which in our version are "last end," have by the authors of the Septuagint been translated posterity. This translation has been adopted by several learned men, and I readily grant that it carries with it no impropriety. Under the Mosaic economy long life and

health were among the blessings promised to the obedient Israelites, and in conformity to their expectation of long life and health, Balaam when speaking of them expresses his wish for both these rewards of righteousness; but you will remember that in the Mosaic law, not only the sins of the father were visited upon the children, but the virtues of the father were recompensed in the prosperity of the children, and therefore Balaam might reasonably express his hope, that to his children, as well as to himself, the same blessing might be vouchsafed.

Asherut is the original word, and according to a a learned lexicographer, it means any thing that comes *after* according to the context, as latter end,* reward, posterity,† future event, or condition. But for reasons of verbal criticism I prefer the version latter end, which you read in your Bibles. In several parts of scripture the same noun feminine occurs with the sense of latter end; but when posterity is definitely and clearly implied, we have from the same root asher, which denotes after, another derivative. It is a masculine plural, and is accompanied by a pronominal suffix equivalent to theirs, or yours, or thine, in our own language. The circumstances then of a plural number, and of a masculine gender, and of a suffix, sufficiently point out

---

* It means *latter end*, Deut. viii. 16. Ecclesiasticus, ix. 9. Psalm. ii. 2.

† When spoken of Amalek it means *posterity*, 1 Kings, xiv. 10.; xvi. 8.; Isaiah, ii. 2.

the sense of posterity, and distinguish the word from another derivative which is of the singular number, which is of the feminine gender, which has no suffix, and which occurring in the text ought I think to be understood there as it is in other places, as implying latter end. I am aware of an objection, which may with little difficulty be removed. It may be that for a man to have his last end like the righteous, is virtually only a repetition of the former thought, that he may die the death of the righteous. But such repetitions are to be found in the best writers of the Greek, the Latin, and our own tongue. They are very frequent in Hebrew. They are technically marked by the name of parallelisms, and the principle has been judiciously and repeatedly illustrated in Bishop Lowth's notes on Isaiah, Dr. Blayney's on Jeremiah, and Archbishop Newcome's on the minor prophets. Their cause is to be found in the well known operations of the human mind; for when it is powerfully affected by hope, fear, joy, sorrow, desire, or aversion, we are naturally led to dilate and to diversify what passes within us by a vivid and close view of the objects exciting these several emotions.

I stated to you that Michaelis, a learned orientalist, contends that Balaam when he wishes to die the death of the righteous looked onward to a future state. I have given you largely my own reasons for holding a different opinion. I have appealed to the authority of several celebrated prelates; and for the farther support of the interpretation I would adopt, I will now inform you that the words

have thus been translated by the learned Dr. Geddes, —may I, or as it is in the Hebrew, may my soul die the death of the righteous, and like them be my latter end. In opposition to Michaelis, the very judicious Rosenmüller thus explains the words of Balaam. The Israelites will enjoy such great happiness as I wish to enjoy at my death; may it be my fortune so to live and die as will the Israelites. This is a perspicuous and I think a correct exposition; though I prefer the interpretation which represents the Israelites as signified by the word righteous, and the reward of that righteousness as consisting in long life, and in exemption from a premature and violent death; and though I agree with our version in using the phrase latter end rather than posterity, still, my brethren, I entreat you to remark, that in the other senses, as well as that to which I accede, we find encouragements to obedience, and grounds for a fervent prayer to heaven. The Jews and Balaam looked for worldly prosperity and a tranquil death; and why may not we pray for the same as a temporal recompence for our endeavours to obtain the favour of the Almighty? As Christians we have higher expectations than the Jews or Balaam in a life to come, and therefore supplicate the deity to make us happy in that life. When the present and the future recompence of obedience are thus set before us, we have the very strongest motives for the very strongest exertions, that under the guidance of heaven we may lead the blameless life of the righteous, die the tranquil death of the righteous, and after death ob-

tain the reward of the righteous in a blessed immortality. And surely, my brethren, it is no inconsiderable part of our Christian duty, that our prayers may ascend to the throne of the Almighty in behalf of our children as well as ourselves.

Let me recapitulate briefly and plainly. As the followers of Jesus Christ you may pray for length of days, and for a death unaccompanied by violence to your persons, anguish to your body, and dreadful perturbation to your minds. You may pray for similar blessings to your beloved children, and their progeny. Above all, you may pray for the salvation of their souls and your own; and such prayers you will observe, may be poured forth with peculiar fitness and peculiar earnestness, when scenes of mortality are passing before your eyes from the decease of neighbours, of friends, of relatives, of the wise, of the good, and of the truly great.

Some of the topics to which I have adverted in the foregoing discourse, may recall to your minds, and my own, two recent occurrences, in one of which I am myself more immediately concerned, and in the other we are all of us equally interested, not only as faithful subjects of our national laws, but as serious worshippers of our Father which is in heaven.

It has pleased God to visit me with a painful and dangerous illness. It hath also pleased him to support my spirits in every stage of the malady. It hath pleased him to call into action the natural vigour of my constitution. It hath pleased him to supply me with the most efficacious help from the

professional skilfulness of my physicians, and the faithful and tender attention of my family. It has further pleased him to refresh my spirits by the sincere and affectionate sympathies of my neighbours, my friends, my relatives, and with heartfelt satisfaction I add, of all my parishioners, whether rich or poor. It hath pleased him in a manner most acceptable to my soul thus to recompence the interests I have taken in the welfare of those fellow-creatures and fellow-christians, who by his providence have been committed to my charge, for instruction, consolation, or succour. Finally, it hath pleased him to grant me a progressive recovery, so that ere long I may return to my laborious studies, to my domestic comforts, and to my various duties as a member of society, and a teacher of Christianity. And what reward shall I give unto thee, O merciful God, for all the benefits which thou hast done unto me! With increased gratitude for thy loving kindness I will now pay my vows in the courts of thy house; with increased trust in thy guidance and protection I will at the table of thy Son drink the cup of salvation; with increased reverence for thy wisdom and power, I will call upon thy name while I have my being. The goodly fellowship of the apostles, prophets and martyrs, do acknowledge thy infinite majesty; innumerable hosts of angels and archangels proclaim thy adorable perfections. The heaven, the earth, the universe itself are full of thy wonderous works. Glory therefore, be unto thee Holy Father, Lord Most High, Almighty and everlasting God.

On Sunday next I shall direct your attention to some instructions which I wish to lay before you, as suggested by the death of our late venerable Sovereign; and, as I shall then detain you for a considerable time, I shall conclude this discourse by reminding you of the conduct which I have hitherto pursued as your teacher, whensoever I was required to speak upon public affairs.

Parishioners, you will do me the justice to acknowledge, that through a war long protracted, sanguinary, and perhaps unprecedented in heaviness of expence and frequency of disasters, I studiously and avowedly abstained from all discussions upon controverted subjects of politics. Faithful in reading to you those formularies which were prescribed by my ecclesiastical superiors, I drew an exact line between professional obedience and personal approbation. Though I was disgusted by obsequiousness in some quarters, and turbulence in others; though I often paused where others decided, and mourned where others exulted; though I doubted now and then whether our fasts were altogether such as God had chosen—days for a man to afflict his soul, to bow down his head like a bulrush, to break the bonds of wickedness, to deal his bread to the hungry, to clothe the naked, and never to implore strife and perpetuate debate—I harangued not on the consequences of either defeat or success; I adopted not the language of ministerial zealots or infuriate reformers; I scattered not the flowers of rhetorical eulogy upon our national virtues, pourtrayed as they sometimes were by other preachers in

the glowing colours of national vanity; I fulminated not indiscriminately and vehemently against the crimes of a neighbouring, and then hostile people. Alarmed I was and often shocked at the licentious and impious effusions of individuals, who for a moment bore sway; but common sense, and indeed common justice restrained me from extending the charge of atheism to a whole people—yes, to a whole people, not only educated in the belief of Christianity, but attached to a particular form of it by the suspended, but not forgotten laws of their country—by the example of their forefathers—by the recorded devotion and munificent bequests of sovereigns in a long and splendid line of succession—by ceremonies which they had themselves frequently and scrupulously performed—by habitual reverence for preachers, confessors and councils—by a willing and conscientious submission to a spiritual head, whom they obeyed as the vicar of Christ himself—by devout meditation upon legends of glorified saints and martyrs—by pride for the fancied superiority of their own church in doctrine, discipline, antiquity and numbers, and by a spirit of scorn mingled with intolerance towards the advocates of a creed less copious and less captivating than that which they had been accustomed to profess, to vindicate, and to recommend under the most awful penalties to the heretical recusant. Infidelity may decoy the airy sciolist; it may soothe for a season the speculative recluse; but it has no charms of sufficient potency to chill in a moment, and for ever, the hatred of a sincere Romanist. Whatsoever

might have been the outrages of a brutal soldiery and infuriate populace, and whatsoever the jargon of upstarts, buffoons, and infidels, who blasphemed one day, and the next were swept away by rivals in depravity, I could not believe the contagion of impiety to be universal. During the long and dark night of heathenism, the Deity I remembered in common with St. Paul, had not left himself without witness in his visible works, and to me it was incredible that total darkness should on a sudden overspread the minds of the young, the old, the serious, and the cheerful, while the sun and moon, pursuing their wonted course, and the firmament glowing with stars proclaimed a Maker omnipotent; nor while a despoiled and detruncated temple, a defaced altar, or a mutilated crucifix, must have brought back to the minds of the beholder the meritorious sufferings of a dying Redeemer, whom he had humbly and gratefully adored.

I am by no means insensible to the malignant properties of infidelity, as it may affect individuals sometimes in the solemn garb of metaphysics, sometimes in the loose attire of art, and sometimes in the coarser garments of vulgar aud impudent buffoonery. But I hold that no virtuous purpose can be answered by charging a community indiscriminately and entirely with such impiety as excludes the very existence of a deity. Let us attend to the testimony of facts. Nations, when migratory from compulsion or from choice, carry with them not a dreary tale of atheism, but the history and the images of their own tutelary deities. The stiff-

necked and perverse Jews did not pass from the belief of one God to the belief of none; on the contrary they were polytheists, they were idolaters, and they transferred the homage due to Jehovah to Baal, to Nebat, to Chemosh, to Moloch, and the various abominations of Moab, Canaan, and Egypt. In our own country, during the reign of Henry the Eighth, priories, abbies, ancient and stately cathedrals, were razed from their foundations, and yet the causes of this fury were not confined, as was said of French atheism, to one country, but co-operated by very strong sympathy both with the rational and the wild reformers of Saxony, Bohemia, and Geneva. In the time of Charles the First our churches were defaced with brutal violence, and yet the passions which produced it did not break out suddenly as was said of French atheism, but had been growing up nearly for a century under the various forms of puritanism. In these changes of natural opinion there was zeal without knowledge; there was knowledge without moderation; there were clamours and mutual accusations of impiety and presumption between the Romanist and the members of the English church, and between the members of the English church and the conventiclers. But in these changes and these contentions there was no national tendency towards atheism. In that blindness of the understanding to which conscience itself, perverted by prejudice and bigotry, is disposed—a blindness which confounds the love of victory for the love of truth—a blindness which fatally leads us to measure the love of God by the hatred of our

neighbour, whom we represent as an outcast of his favour—every sect in its turn curses those whom a righteous deity may bless. But instead of holding up a future state to derision as a trick of priests and statesmen, to secure the timid and decoy the credulous, all the leaders, and all the followers of the contending parties wished avowedly to die the death of the righteous. In these changes the agents did not deny the existence of a God, they did not set his displeasure at defiance, but unfeignedly sought to execute what they conceived to be his will. There was no rejection of a Redeemer sent down from heaven; but a direct appeal to his gospel, in opposition to the supposed abuses of it from superstition. Mistaken notions of piety or fanaticism there might be through the whole nation; but there were no vestiges of that desperate impiety which was charged upon the whole people of France; and indeed that any whole people should suddenly become atheists is contrary to all history, to all experience, to all philosophy, and to the grave decisions of wise and pious sages, who justly maintain that the belief of God is connatural to the mind of man.

I have laid before you thus fully the reasons which restrained me from echoing and re-echoing the reproaches which were once hurled in our senate, our courts of justice, our pulpits, our theatres, and our very streets; and though I was conscious of incurring much obloquy at the moment, yet I know myself to have acted under the guidance of a mind not wholly unenlightened by study and reflection,

nor wholly destitute of sensibility to the distinctions between right and wrong.

In our own country we have recently witnessed most audacious results against the sacred authority of the Gospel; but have they produced, I do not say, national infidelity, but any visible diminution of sincere and pious worshippers in our own churches, or in the sanctuaries frequented by Romanists and Protestant Dissenters? have they not been hunted down by general and just indignation? have they not been reprobated in the senate and by the people, and visited with just rigour by the laws?

My researches in religion, my veneration for it, my love of it convinced me, that it must have taken too deep root in the hearts of a neighbouring people to be at once torn up even by the dreadful tempests which had convulsed their government. Under these impressions so deep and serious, I did not dare to degrade the venerable church of these realms by introducing into the pulpit what I considered as slanderous exaggerations, tending, alas! to make religious zeal subservient to political animosity. But from these deliberate, and, I am well aware, unpopular omissions, does it follow that I was a negligent spectator of many terrific and extraordinary occurences, or that I was a faithless pastor of the flock committed to my care? No, my brethren; I followed the express and seasonable directions of our public services in exhorting you to review your own lives, to amend your own sins, and to obtain the protection of heaven to yourselves and the com-

munity to which you belonged, by following its righteous commands. I prayed again and again that the moral Governor of the Universe would turn the hearts of all rulers, and all their people, towards the amiable duties and the inestimable blessings of peace. I pointed out to you the plain and safe path in which it became you and your countrymen to tread, and to approve yourselves, before heaven and earth, substantially good subjects by acting up to your character as good Christians. Yet, my brethren, in the sincerity of my soul I recommended to you that pure morality and that rational piety, which can alone secure for you the accomplishment of your prayer to die the death of the righteous. Such was the spirit of moderation and seriousness in which I then addressed you, and such too is the spirit in which I shall soon treat upon other subjects far less dubious in their nature, and far more congenial to my own moral and religious feelings.

In regard then to our late Sovereign, I should think it my duty to speak of him according to the conviction of my mind. If there were any faults in him, let us forgive them, my brethren, as we must ourselves wish to be forgiven. If there were excellencies, and many there were, let us acknowledge, commend, and imitate them. Genuine loyalty is not at variance with sincerity. It consists not in yielding superfluous and ostentatious homage to wicked princes, but in doing prompt and plenary justice to the substantial and exemplary merits of the good. We trust that the Sovereign whose loss we deplore deserved to die the death of the righteous,

and if, as subjects, we earnestly endeavour to practice the virtues which have been justly ascribed to him, we may reasonably hope that, by the mercy of God, our own last end will be like that which, if the undisturbed possession of his intellectual powers had been granted to him, would, in all probability, have been his; and that together with him we may be partakers of a blessed immortality.

SERMON VIII.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.

IN a former discourse I laid before you the different opinions of learned expositors upon both the clauses contained in the text. I detailed fully the reasons which induced me to consider the Israelites in their national capacity as designed by the righteous, and to interpret the wish of Balaam as referring to the recompence of virtue, not in a world to come, but in long life and in exemption from violent death, as the blessings reserved by the Deity for the obedient Israelites. I adopted the version of our English Bible, "*last end*," instead of "posterity," as employed by the Septuagint; and finally I pointed out the useful reflections which every one of the explanations suggested for the guidance of our own conduct, and the promotion of our own present and future happiness. Then I told you, that the topics to which I adverted must have recalled to your minds, as well as my own, a recent event in which we are deeply interested, not only as subjects of the

English laws, but as worshippers of G
the hallowed name of Jesus Christ.
you of my intention to set before you
which distinguished our venerated M
weighty reasons I reminded you, that u
troverted questions of politics, to whi
days of fasting and thanksgiving turne
of many hearers and the harangues of ma
I reluctantly said any thing, and endea
the very little with the utmost warin
deration. I added, that to speak of t
was a duty far more agreeable to me
I had to perform upon other public oc
I should be under the necessity of
very far the limits usually assigned to s
that, remembering not only the impor
subject itself, but the sanctity of this pl
with my former caution and sincerity la
my sentiments upon the various and
matters that might present themselves
I shall now proceed to execute the pur
then announced to you.

To delineate the various merits of
loved Sovereign, exactly and fully, is th
future historians, whose materials will
ple than our own, and whose minds
unruffled by those strong emotions o
prediiection, or dislike, which men of
our situation, and in our own age, mus
gree have experienced. But as entire
upon the public conduct of our Mo
imply latent disapprobation, I shall sho

seem not wholly unfit to be
of God.
this sanctuary, I am little
nclined, to strew the flowers
for their political measures,
nscious sincerity in selecting
ubstantial excellencies which
cter of our King. Uniformly
f justice keep in view that
ng the choicest attributes of
pices the cause of religious
ned strength by the partial
ld I have been to say the
e, unjust, and inhuman re-
ers, both Catholic and Pro-
lectual, and consequently the
ubjects, he was a strenuous
was that he patronized some
sing the precious advantages
the humblest classes of the
ity he had not, and probably
to gain celebrity as a warrior;
st ground for suspicion that
queror. Firm, doubtless, he
retain the empire which had
by his progenitors, and yet
ve formed ambitious projects
of it by treacherous negotia-
olence, to the annoyance of
nd here surely it may be re-
kness of a prince in abandon-
h really belonged to himself

and his progenitors may be no less detrimental to his people than a restless eagerness to grasp that which is not his own.

Upon his ascending the throne, he wielded the sceptre over a people free and prosperous. He must have perceived that in the energies of that freedom, and the resources of that prosperity, lay his own strength, and tenacious as he may have been of authority, we ought not therefore to assume that he would systematically have inflicted thraldom and impoverishment upon his brave and loyal subjects. The revolt of distant colonies, whom milder councils might have conciliated, the revolutionary excesses of a neighbouring kingdom, the precipitate and vindictive expedients employed to remedy the disastrous issues of confederacies repeatedly formed and repeatedly dissolved, the unusual and uncouth alliance of chimerical metaphysics with political empiricism, the rapid strides of a sagacious and intrepid conqueror, the sufferings of those whom he had subdued, the alarms of those whom he had spared—these multiplied difficulties, these accumulated dangers must have produced such trials to the forbearance and the foresight of our Sovereign, that no candid man would be disposed to censure him severely for every mistake in his judgment or every disappointment in his exertions.

Mistake me not. In the foregoing observations I mean not to justify indiscriminately, much less to panegyrize hypocritically, but to state those explanations which no honest man will suppress or underrate when he is exploring the causes, and meditating upon

measures which, in common with many nd sincere well-wishers to his country, mpelled to disapprove. In the opinions n of each other in common life, Christian es us to make large allowances for the early education, and why, let me ask, igns be excused from the benefit of the said, as it justly may, that such prejudices exalted rank are more extensively injurety, be it also remembered, that princes men are exposed to them, when they nto the bosom of young and inexperiby tutors whose age and whose knowhave been encouraged to respect, and find an easier admission, because they ed to our instinctive love of power, ompanied by the recommendation of dients to preserve that power from rude nd to enlarge it according to favourable s. Beset with the infirmities of human my brethren, among ourselves, under stances, would not lend a willing ear?

o the causes just now mentioned may be e less pleasing features of a very long suggestions of an affectionate mother, n a foreign state, was not very likely to even to understand the principles of our rnment—the high monarchical principles austere, haughty, but not unfaithful nobleted to be his guide—the ambitious views abals of many discontented partizans, re- just resentment of the reigning prince,

whom many of them inwardly wished to dethrone, crowding round the court of the heir-apparent, will enable us to account for some errors and some infirmities, which even the regard we bear to our sovereign cannot induce us wholly to overlook.

In two preceding reigns a numerous and high-born class of subjects, not only by loud professions, but by the honest practice of loyalty, had engrossed power; and let it not be forgotten that, by the wise and vigorous exertions of such power, they preserved two princes from the consequences of two formidable rebellions. Another class of high-born men, who were quickly called into the service of our late sovereign, must have anxiously wished, and would have eagerly seized, the moment for retribution. Jealousy of those who, in the opinion of the new sovereign, had encroached upon the rights of his predecessors, would be disguised, even from the agent himself, under the captivating novelty and seeming justice of calling into favour those who had been too long and too rigorously excluded from it. I am no stranger to the blindness and the wayward-ness of ambition, and I think it possible that the ministers of the two former reigns may in some instances have stepped beyond the bounds of candour and moderation. But it must be acknowledged that by fidelity to the principles upon which the House of Brunswick was called to the throne, they secured the descent of it to that illustrious line; and I should think that, on the ground merely of gratitude for services rendered under most severe trials, they were entitled to look, not, I may grant, for any im-

eminent distinction in the distribution of favours, much less for the exclusive possession of power, but for exemption from that continued, studied, and marked neglect, which bordered upon contumelious proscription.

They who in order to govern think it necessary to divide, should discern where to remunerate, though sparingly, as well as to repress significantly. They should beware of investing one class of men with huge and towering authority, while another, not inferior in hereditary opulence, in high descent, in polished manners, liberal education, intellectual powers, and honourable sentiments, are bereaved of it entirely. They should remember that, through the instability of human affairs, they may one day stand in need of counsel and support in quarters where for the present they are most unwilling to solicit them;—they should take care not to extinguish hope, lest they furnish opportunities for dark intrigue, or provocations to implacable hostility. But such, blessed be God! are the habits, and such the temper of the English people, that the intrigue and the hostility which I should ever deprecate are seldom found among the unsuccessful aspirants to power; and such, let me add, is the genius of our constitution, that an English king may call for our attachment and obedience, not as the champion of any political confederacy, but as the impartial minister of wise and equal laws—as the supreme dispenser of honour to the meritorious noble, and of mercy to the unfortunate criminal—as the common protector, friend, and father of all his loving subjects. He who sustains such a cha-

racter in this highly-favoured land, will experimentally find that the affection of his people will be a guard amply sufficient for the safety of his person and the splendour of his throne, and far surpassing all the deep-contrived securities, and all the proud distinctions, that lie within the reach of the military usurper, the capricious and arbitrary despot, and the restless and ruthless oppressor. Where, indeed, is the bosom that would not have been hurt with honest rage? where the lips that would not have poured forth indignant execrations? where the arm that would not have been lifted up with just and terrible vengeance against the fell destroyer of that sovereign whose honourable age stood not, as says the wise man, in length of time, but in an unspotted life.

Tempted may some of you be to exclaim, Oh! that before the close of his existence he had been favoured with a short lucid interval, and informed that the irritated and irritating disturber of Europe had been checked in his career, that the bravery of English soldiers, and the skilfulness of English commanders, were conspicuous in the last decisive struggle, and that peace was at length restored to a troubled world. His last end, I grant you, would then not have been unworthy of the righteous, and his death, as Milton beautifully says, would have appeared to be the gentle passage of a good man to immortal life. Such, however, was not the will of Heaven; and in this, as in many other instances, may be discerned the darkness of human foresight and the vanity of human wishes. In the sight of the unwise, we read in the book of

Wisdom, the righteous seem to die, and their departure is taken for misery. We see not the end of the wise, nor what God hath decreed of him, and to what end the Lord hath set him in safety. Now the loss of sight and of intellectual soundness were to our sovereign as death; and, while we lament that he had not the gratification just now mentioned, let us not forget that in some respects he was taken away from the evil to come. Look to him in private life: he saw not the multiplied exacerbations and unbecoming progress of domestic discord, in a cause where he had previously shewn the wisdom of age and the generosity of youth, in vindication of what he thought calumniated innocence—he saw not the lingering and fatal illness of a personage whom he for many years had treated with courtesy as a woman, and with tenderness as a wife—he saw not the premature death of a beloved grand-daughter, who, compulsorily severed from one parent, and perhaps not entirely devoted to the opinions and views of the other, was deprived of many intellectual and moral aids, which his experience and affection would have abundantly supplied.

Have we no consolation if we examine the consequences of his infirmities as they concern his public capacity? Yes. He saw not the horrors which pervaded Europe from the disastrous occurrences which preceded the frantic march of Napoleon to Moscow, and his subsequent defeats in Saxony and at Waterloo—he saw not the degraded and afflicted condition of Spain, under a weak, ungrateful, and faithless monarch, who is said to reign under the guid-

ance of wicked counsellors, and the control of an ignorant, bigotted, and treacherous priesthood—he saw not the portentous aspect of a gathering storm, which sooner or later will burst upon other parts of the Continent, from dissatisfaction and disunion, because promises have been violated, because services have been ill-requited, because redress has been refused, because reflecting inquirers into political truths have been menaced with the infliction of rigorous penalties, and remonstrants against tyrannous usurpations have been thrust down into lonely, dank, sunless, moonless, starless dungeons —he saw not the undeserved distresses, the angry divisions, the military outrages, the fell and hideous conspiracies, which have arisen in a land where union and concord and prosperity were expected as the genuine fruits of victory succeeded by peace. Spared he thus was by the mercy of Providence from these and other evils to come, which, if having eyes to see he *had* seen, or ears to hear he had heard them, might sooner have brought down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Favourable as were these circumstances to his tranquillity, there are other points which we must contemplate with satisfaction, as advantageous to his character. It has been observed that, from the envy or malignity of contemporaries, sages, legislators, patriots, and other benefactors of mankind, while living, have been bereaved of that renown which the good sense and good feelings of posterity ultimately bestowed, when their names had been consecrated by death. Now, from peculiar circum-

stances, justice was done to the excellencies of our sovereign much sooner than it usually is to persons in his high station. For several years before his death he had been wholly unqualified for the duties of the regal office by mental or corporeal infirmity. But though unseen he was not forgotten, and the prolongation of his existence was eventually conducive to his good name. He had ceased, indeed, to allure the homage of expectants, and on the gratitude of those who had received much, and looked for no more, little reliance was to be placed. But he had also ceased to be responsible for the want of wisdom in the national councils, or want of success in the national arms. In those tempestuous seasons when the judgments of men are often perverted by their passions, both their judgments and their passions were more and more directed towards the good qualities of their sovereign. If deep affliction in those whom we dislike often blunts the edge of resentment, with what increased tenderness does it endear to us every recollection of a fellow-creature who had previously been an object of our good-will and esteem. Hence, towards the later stages of a long war, and upon the auspicious return of peace, the curiosity and the pity of the people were turned towards their aged and afflicted sovereign, and their spirits, wearied with tales of carnage, and shrieks of terror, and shouts of victory, found repose, while they contemplated the more simple, familiar, and lovely forms of virtue, in those pure and unfading colours which adorn private life. To these virtues, then, I shall soon direct your attention.

In the measures and motives of the best ministers and best kings there must sometimes be complex or doubtful circumstances, which a religious instructor would think it indiscreet and indecorous to leave untouched. It is, indeed, for statesmen rather than theologians to explore the bye-paths and recesses of the mind, where may have been deposited those secret views of men and things which are said to influence the judgment and resolves of princes in public concerns, and in which the skill that eludes discovery is now and then preferred to that simplicity and that ingenuousness which affect no mystery, shrink from no scrutiny, stoop to the practice of no imposture, but spurn and baffle it when practised by other men. Gladly, however, and confidently, do I resist that imputation of hypocrisy which was aimed at the private character of our sovereign, by a writer who long has been, and long will be, celebrated for brilliancy of diction, plausibility of statement, and poignancy of invective.

PART THE SECOND.

Whatsoever may have been the right or the erroneous decision of his judgment in the choice of persons who were to direct the affairs of state, let me turn your attention to the munificence of your King; to his becoming manners, on which I shall expatiate more particularly; to his personal courage; to his domestic occupations; to his favourite amusements; and to the properties of a higher order in his moral character.

For many ages in France and Italy, far advanced in knowledge, and for a century in Russia, emerging from barbarism, royal munificence has been bestowed upon men distinguished by ingenuity and erudition, and their proficiency in the finer arts; but in England, where the wealth of the Sovereign arises from stipulation with the legislature, and is less under the control of the possessor, pensions to scholars and men of genius are more rare. And yet we exultingly remember that while a Samuel Johnson was struggling with disease, with sorrow, with a precarious and scanty pittance, scarcely supporting existence, breathing unwholesome air, the rays of royal bounty shone out unsolicited upon him, brightened the remainder of his days, and enabled him with less embarrassment to himself to put forth the powers of his vigorous mind with greater advantage to mankind.

To this meritorious act of justice and generosity towards a learned man, let us add the testimony of

respect which our Sovereign bore to the general cause of literature, when he formed a library which, considered as the work of one man, must be allowed, in the number, the usefulness, and, in some respects, even the rarity of the books contained in it, to surpass any collection made by any one sovereign, or any one Roman pontiff in our own, or any preceding age. Generations after our own, and in many countries beside our own, scholars will place the royal founder in the same illustrious catalogue of benefactors to learning, with the names of Ptolemy Lagus, who built the famous library at Alexandria, and of Osymander, who, many centuries before Ptolemy, having raised a sumptuous palace at Egyptian Thebes, constructed and furnished a most spacious edifice for the reception of books, and caused to be inscribed upon it this appropriate and memorable title—the repository of medicine for the soul.* We have little to fear from the revolutions of empires and ravages of war, which destroyed the renowned collections at Thebes and Alexandria, and in later times, through the fury of Goths and Vandals, swept away so many remains of genius displayed by artists and writers both Greek and Roman. The devices of banners and other trophies of victory will fade, triumphal arches, military columns, imperial palaces, will decay; but the intellectual treasures of the Vatican at Rome, and of the Royal Library in our own country, will remain when the buildings in which they were deposited will be seen no more.

* Diodorus Siculus.

There is a class of qualities, of which the intrinsic importance is indistinctly perceived, while the exterior forms are highly valued by common observers. The results of liberal education, and sympathies awakened by the artificial refinements of society, exalt the qualities to which I advert from the ornamental to the useful. Hence in a prince, who is to receive not only the representatives of foreign potentates, but the natives of foreign countries, widely differing from each other in customs, prejudices, laws, and religion;—in him who is to adapt his personal address to many individuals and many classes, to the young and to the old, to males and females—in him, who is to make his conversation acceptable to the nobility, gentry, and magistracy, to naval and military chiefs, to grave judges, to enlightened ecclesiastics, to the delegates of learned universities, and the members of ancient and wealthy corporations—politeness has not only the merit of a graceful accomplishment, but acquires in some degree the properties of morality itself. Carrying with him the delicate and generous feelings which nature has implanted in the heart of man, and which are disciplined by the wholesome institutions of social life, who indeed would not turn away with disgust from the presence of a foppish, or a vulgar, or a churlish, or a contemptuous and arrogant monarch? It is, therefore, to the credit of our own, that in this inferior class of duties he acted up to his own exalted situation. Predilections he must have had, and antipathies like other men; he was required, and he was also accustomed to exercise over such predilections and such antipathies the severest control, and

to beware lest they should betray him into the violations of those proprieties which every subject may reasonably expect, when in doing homage to his lawful sovereign he at once recognizes and sustains the privileges of that sovereign, and asserts the rights which the same sovereign is bound to respect in his dutiful and civilized inferiors. With pleasure then, must we remember, that in the estimation of the soft and luxurious Asiatic, the sturdy German, and the more polished inhabitants of Italy and France—that in the estimation of Romanists, Protestants, and even the followers of Mahomet—that in the estimation of keen-eyed sages, of fastidious courtiers, and high-spirited patriots at home, our monarch, himself the fountain of honour, was supposed to act in perfect conformity to the sentiments and habits of honourable men. The rectitude and the grandeur of his mind were conspicuous through his intercourse with society in common life. He disdained to indulge a petty and inglorious ambition of catching popular applause by the exhibition of unnecessary, unusual, and in princes I would add unbecoming, proficiency in those meretricious and shewy qualifications which dazzle the unthinking and the vain—qualifications, the display of which, I fear, is sometimes employed as a substitute for solid worth, or a disguise for latent depravity. On the contrary, his deportment was adorned by ease without slovenliness, by cheerfulness without levity, and by dignity without haughtiness.

In comparing the advantages which characterize the most enlightened nations of antiquity, and those of later ages, a celebrated philosopher has ob-

served, that extended civilization is the point in which the superiority of the moderns is most indisputable. And be it ever remembered that, from the genius of our free constitution, the principles of our holy religion, the checks which legal regulations or increasing knowledge have put upon our selfish or harsher affections, the blessings of civilization are among us more widely diffused than in any other Christian land—are more consistent with the reasonable privileges of the few, and the undeniable rights of the many—are more visible by the habits of those middle ranks, which fill up the wide chasm between the very rich and the very poor—more efficacious in combining social order with general happiness.

Consider, I beseech you, the great public duties which your sovereign discharged, while he preserved consummate propriety in private life. To select skilful persons for conducting the business of government in its higher, intermediate, and lower departments—to discriminate between the fawning sycophant and the faithful counsellor—to recompense the meritorious without offending the vain—to understand the weaknesses and capacities, the sympathies and antipathies of men whose sphere of action is far removed from the throne—to concede without pusillanimity, and to persevere without obstinacy—to temper justice with mercy in the administration of laws—to prevent wariness from degenerating into restless suspicion—to mark the boundaries which separate reasonable and manly from blind and perilous confidence—to protect the com-

plicated but fluctuating interests of commerce—to protect the discipline and rights of a national church without diminishing the salutary interests of toleration—to restrain the impetuosity of domestic factions without encroaching on the antient and fundamental principles of the constitution—to penetrate the secret councils of cabinets, whether friendly or hostile—to mark the sudden or progressive changes of measures, views, and resources, both in the weaker and the stronger states, and by avoiding the appearance, as well as the reality, of meditated wrong, to maintain the usual and sacred relations of amity and peace with foreign powers. These doubtless are the arduous duties, and they are also the necessary qualifications of a king.

In order then to point out to you more clearly the real advantages you have hitherto enjoyed, let me hypothetically put an opposite, and you will observe a merely ideal case. Would not the qualifications I just now enumerated be lightly esteemed, and would not the duties connected with them be scantily performed, if in any part of Christendom a ruler were to arise, who should be accustomed to display munificence by reckless prodigality, to patronize not luminaries in literature but adepts in luxury — to select his companions, not from the great and noble of the land, but from low-born and low-minded dependants, and libertines wallowing in sensuality? The history of later reigns presents to us no such disgusting spectacle; and may the example of our late sovereign, transmitted through successive generations, preserve our de-

scendants from scenes of senseless and graceless dissipation, which even in other governments less favourable to human happiness, would be reluctantly endured and secretly despised. But knowing that passiveness takes its first impulses from those who frequent palaces, and those who preside over them, and then diffuses itself in numerous directions through the various classes of the community, the free-born and loyal-hearted Briton shrinks from the view of contamination at the source, where chiefly ought to be found purity and abundance. He would therefore disdain to bend the knee before an idol bedecked in glittering attire, and set on high for the gaze of the ignorant, and the prostrations of the servile. Confiding in the greatness of his own soul, he reserves the feeling and the expression of respect due to royalty for that which is greater than the greatest in the assemblies of the great. In the arbiter of his fortune, his liberty, and perhaps his life, he expects to meet, and meeting he is prepared to love, honour, and humbly to obey a monarch accomplished without foppery, affable without flippancy, courteous without the insidious smile, and majestic without the high-arched, full-stretched, and repulsive brow. Till overtaken by mental derangement, such a monarch I must again remind you, was once the boast of our own nation in our own times.

Personal courage is to be seen in bad and good men. It may be applied to purposes salutary or noxious, and yet the absence of it is, in the general estimation of the world, a defect, which many laud-

able qualities are scarcely sufficient to excuse. From the insular situation of our country it rarely happens that our monarchs place themselves at the head of armies, and this circumstance may be favourable to our liberty and our tranquillity, by removing one of the causes which incite princes to look for celebrity from military exploits. But the fortitude of our sovereign, as the efficacy of it was brought into view by the fury of his maniacal assailants, was of a kind which had its appropriate name and place in the fourfold division of virtues, as established among the moralists of antiquity. It did not wait for the sound of the trumpet or the clash of arms. It was adapted to the perilous incidents of common life. It was calm and unostentatious. It acquired strength under the discipline of reflection. It was a match for the suddenness as well as the violence of attack, and above all it was supported by an unfeigned and unshaken trust in the invisible, but most intelligible protection of Heaven.

But further, in respect to other men, however distinguished by superiority in talent, descent, situation, or influence, their amusements can rarely be topics fit for notice in the sanctuary. But even the most common habits of a sovereign attract more or less general curiosity, mark more or less his real feelings and principles, and imperceptibly more or less improve or corrupt the morals of his contemporaries. I may therefore be permitted to observe that even in moments of relaxation, our late sovereign upheld the dignity of the throne—that some

of his pursuits were not only favourable to his health and his spirits, but to the good of his country; and that in his fondness for agriculture he fostered among his subjects a spirit of emulation, which encouraged other men of opulence and enterprise in experiments beneficial to the community, and tending to multiply the fruits of the earth for the convenience of the rich and the comforts of the poor.

Scholars cannot fail to be charmed with the eloquent tale which Xenophon thought not unworthy to be told by Socrates himself, that when Lysander, the valiant Lacedemonian, visited Cyrus, the younger King of Persia at Sardis, he was conducted by him into a well-sown field, that he admired the tallness of the trees, the goodly cultivation of the soil, and the sweet odours exhaled from the flowers, that he extolled the diligence and skill of the unknown agriculturist, that he enquired for his name, that Cyrus replied, *I* measured out these lands, these rows are *mine*, and by *my own* hands were planted many of these flourishing trees; and that Lysander was far more struck with the industry, ingenuity, and success of the royal husbandman, than with the purple, the gold, and the precious gems, which, according to the well-known spirit of oriental magnificence, adorned the person of the monarch.

Every well-educated man remembers that Cincinnatus passed, with undiminished dignity, from the simple and noiseless labours of the plough, to the grave deliberations of the senate, and the arduous functions of the dictatorship—that Cato, the stern censor and the inflexible patriot, wrote an elabo-

rate work upon agriculture—that Pliny, the great natural historian, expatiates copiously and pertinently on its praises—and why then should it be dissembled that, instead of giving up his leisure hours to listless indolence, or frivolous sports, or sensual gratifications, our English sovereign devoted to the culture of land much of his attention and his fortune?

Our sovereign, as we all remember, indulged himself in the pleasures of the chace; and let us not listen to the lazy recluse, or the pedantic sciolist, when they would depreciate a practice which has prevailed more or less in all forms of society, and which, under restrictions, will ever find a place among our useful as well as agreeable enjoyments. In a masterly dialogue on the comparative sagacity of marine and terrestrial animals, a learned and philosophical writer* of antiquity has introduced the praise of that diversion to which our monarch was addicted. "I fear," says one of the speakers, "that the commendations yesterday bestowed upon hunting should now and then draw aside our youth from other laudable pursuits; but I cannot dissemble the warm enthusiasm which they stirred up in my own mind. I admit the acuteness of the reasoning and the liveliness of the descriptions. I acknowledge that the practice tends to facilitate that union of skill, courage, and prudence, which may be properly opposed to untutored ignorance, and to untutored ferocity." Another writer, equally cele-

* Plutarch.

brated for the purity of his ethics, and yet more for the elegance of his style, has left us an elaborate treatise on the merits of hunting, and the qualifications of those who engage in it. He enumerates the names of the heroes who had been instructed in it by Chiron; and he seriously tells us that it trains men up, not only to bodily strength, but to many other things in which a good citizen ought to understand, and to speak and to act well. In another and a more popular work, he informs us that the kings of Persia were accustomed to head their parties of hunters; that to some extent the practice qualifies men for military discipline; that it habituates them to early rising, and enables them to undergo the fatigue of long journies, and to bear the extremes of heat and cold. Shall it be said, then, that an English king sullied the lustre of his station by fondness for a diversion which a Plutarch has eulogized, and a Xenophon has recommended?

But from these minor excellencies, which, as the most austere moralist must acknowledge, have a tendency to conciliate general esteem, and, by their wide and frequent efficacy, to increase the aggregate of human happiness, let us turn to other qualities, which have a closer and more sacred connection with our moral agency.

Exemplary, then, was the king as a husband and a father, from the kindest affections of the human soul. But his example is of a yet higher order, when we remember that no descent, however noble, no opulence, however ample, no station, however elevated, prevailed over that honest and firm regard

which he considered as due to the interests of virtue. Hence it was that, through a long reign, he avowedly withdrew his favour from those unhappy persons who had notoriously violated the commands of their Maker by overt acts of shameless adultery. Hence it was that he presented to us that rare and goodly spectacle, in which the manners of a well-regulated court were in unison with the decisions of well-administered laws, and in which a king stood before us arrayed in additional importance by sustaining in effect the venerable office of a judge. Hence it was that he bore a public and a solemn testimony to the authority of those moral principles, which equally bind the monarch on his lofty throne, the noble in his splendid mansion, and the peasant in his humble cottage.

But whether we look to the immediate or remote effects of the pattern which our late sovereign set before us, we shall find them honourable to the agent himself, and beneficial to all observers. That pattern was intelligible to every understanding, and impressive to every heart. It is instructive to every parent in the education of children, to every master in the government of a family, and to every individual of every condition, whether high or low, in the regulation of his own personal conduct. All are required to practise temperance, all to preserve decorum, all to perform regularly and reverentially the hallowed offices of devotion.

Now the praises uniformly and unfeignedly bestowed upon our King while he was living, most assuredly will not be refused to him when he is now

buried among the dead; and in his situation there were peculiar and important circumstances which by me cannot be omitted without impropriety, and which by you cannot be heard without sympathy. When labouring under the dreadful visitations of blindness and insanity, he was incapable of making any direct and voluntary exertion for the welfare of his subjects. But while his sufferings excited sincere and universal commiseration, his previous firmness in distinguishing the virtuous from the vicious, silently but propitiously affected the manners of the age. The good continued to look for a favourable reception within the walls of the palace; the wavering, who might not have been restrained by the fear of a God, stood in awe of an indignant frown from a personage now deceased, who thus far acted according to the wishes, and in the spirit of her royal consort; and the bad were still doomed to ignominious exclusion from their equals and their superiors—still driven from the circles of the gay, and the smiles of the powerful, to mourn the loss of character and importance in helpless solitude—still left a prey to the corrosion of conscience, roused as it had been from levity to reflection, and from obduracy to remorse, by the averted looks or the piercing taunts of a justly indignant world. But are we to confine the beneficial consequences of our Monarch's steadiness and integrity to the mere span of his existence? Far from it. History, which is often slow in doing justice to the merits of a Sovereign, will, at a very early period, both record and applaud the virtues of our late King. History,

which is not always impartial in dispensing praise, will from generation to generation transmit the memory of the moral excellencies which distinguished the royal personage of whom we have lately been bereaved. It will commend him where the justice of commendation is unlikely to be controverted by the blind zeal of party or the fastidious refinements of historical criticism. In the conflict of opinion upon the deserts of sovereigns, fortitude to some may appear rashness, and sagacity may be resolved into dark and crooked cunning. But parental tenderness, but conjugal fidelity, but strict sobriety, but well-intended and well-preserved decency are qualities which no observer is likely to mistake, and no partizan can be under any temptation to depreciate.

Panegyrics we know have often been profusely bestowed upon reigning monarchs for excellencies of which no vestiges could be traced in their passage from the cradle to the grave. Their real faults have been dissembled or explained away. Their real merits, if few, have been multiplied, and if slight, have been exaggerated. The claim of kings to the gratitude of posterity, has in some cases been founded upon the protection which they have given to sculpture, to painting, and to all the elegant arts which adorn civilized society; at other times they have been holden up to the admiration of succeeding ages as profound politicians, as valiant warriors, and as mighty conquerors. And here surely the religionist will often hesitate in yielding his assent to the most eloquent encomiums, when he doubts whether the cause in which

statesmen planned and heroes executed was founded upon strict justice,—when he remembers that of the praise which ought to be given to the wisest counsels in the cabinet, and military feats in the field, a part is due to subordinate coadjutors,—and above all when he recollects, that they who lay province to province, and they who succeed in battle after battle, have inflicted upon thousands and tens of thousands of their unoffending fellow-creatures the severest woe, that amidst the tumults and outrages of war the finest works of art have been effaced, and the most useful productions of nature have been destroyed, and that while Pæans were resounding for the glory of the victor, the hoary-headed father, the affectionate widow, and the helpless orphan are weeping in silent sorrow for the loss of their beloved protectors. No such considerations however will tarnish the lustre of those amiable qualities which we ascribe to our lamented monarch.

His private virtues were entirely his own. They borrowed no part of their brightness or their utility from the suggestions or the aid of other men. They sprung up not from the motives which impel the ambitious to look for fame from victory. They found their reward in the calm and serious self-approbation of the sovereign himself. They stood almost in opposition to the ordinary practices of kings, who, bred in the lap of luxury, allured by temptations to voluptuousness from every side, and fancying themselves privileged to indulge their grosser passions with impunity, lose sight of the veneration and obedience which they owe to their Al-

mighty Creator, plunge without a blush and without a pang into excesses which would disgrace the meanest of their subjects; and either are callous whether or no their wicked example spread infection through the community, or, what is worse, feel an increase of security and self-importance by averting invidious comparisons between themselves and their inferiors, by lessening the number of the virtuous, or by encouraging the audacity of the vicious. But from this heinous and aggravated guilt, which too often belongs to the character of kings, the personage whose loss we deplore was wholly exempt. Among the supporters and the opponents of his royal power, in his own country and in foreign lands, both distant and near, in the present and through many future generations, the name of George the Third will in bright and indelible characters be recorded as the champion of genuine virtue and the protector of true religion.

Historians have taught us to associate the names of kings with brilliant epithets. We read of an Alexander, a Charlemagne, and Frederick the Great, of Titus the Roman Emperor, the love and delight of the human race, of Antiochus the first king of Syria, the preserver; of Ptolemy the second, the lover of his brethren; of Ptolemy the fourth, the lover of his father; of Louis the first emperor of Germany, the pious; of Louis the twelfth, king of France, the just, and father of his people; of Solomon the wise; and of King David, the man after God's own heart; and to this catalogue of regal worthies, many an Englishman and many a Christian may be inclined

exultingly to add the name of George the temperate, the benevolent, and the devout.

Though his lips cannot again be opened in the cabinet or in the senate, and though his remains mouldering into dust, be concealed from our sight in the dark shadow of death, yet to potentates contemporary, and to potentates future, to his immediate successor, and to a long extended line of descendants, his actions seem to utter this warning voice—hear O ye kings, ye that rule and glory in the multitude of nations; for ye, beyond all other human beings, are responsible unto God and unto man. Give ear to the admonitions of one who, from peculiarly long experience in times peculiarly eventful, had peculiar opportunities for knowing your duty and his own; of one who, amidst the pestilential influence of undisguised impiety and unblushing profligacy, not only upon scattered individuals, but upon warriors, legislators, and apostate priests; of one who, amidst the sudden and tumultuous triumph of spurious philosophy over common sense, and during innovation over established laws; of one who amidst the hideous convulsions, or total overthrow of surrounding governments, retained the love, and the respect, and the confidence, and the obedience of his subjects. There was and there could be no misconceptions upon facts, when he shunned, and taught others to shun what is contemptible in manners and odious in vice. Beware then how you idly scoff with the profane, or riot with the licentious. For the sake of yourselves, your descendants, and your respective subjects, seek

the wisdom which is from above, for her ways are ways of pleasantness, and in her paths every prince and every people will eventually find peace.

Such, my brethren, is the salutary and permanent force of righteousness, when practised in the very highest station of life. If, therefore, as we read in an ancient moralist, the world emulously as it were conforms itself to the example of a king; if, as we are told by another ancient moralist, every crime becomes more conspicuous in proportion as the criminal himself is more exalted in rank; if, as we learn from holy writ, a city that is built upon an hill cannot be hid, and if men be accustomed to place a candle, not under a bushel, but on high, that it may be visible and useful to all that are in the house, then surely a prince may be as a light to the world—a light to guide his successors and all other sovereigns to piety and virtue. And let wicked princes remember, a light with the pure and glaring effulgence of which generations yet unborn will compare the dark and dreary aspect of vice and infidelity when they pollute the sceptre, the diadem, and other gorgeous ensigns of royalty. Let such princes remember, that in the world to come, the syren voice of flatterers, and of convulsive laughter of buffoons, will be no longer heard—that the prophets who prophesied falsely, the priests who loved rule by chanting smooth things, and the people who loved to have it so, will stand speechless and appalled at the dread tribunal of the Almighty—that no artifice can then shelter the sins of sovereigns, under all their deformities and with all their aggravations

from exposure—no power can protect them from punishment. Yes, my brethren, whether such princes will hear, or whether they will obey, verily there is a God who judgeth the earth. That God weigheth actions in his own righteous balance—from eternity to eternity he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Great joy, then, must it be to us, that while we pay the tribute of commendation due to our sovereign, we can at the same time look back with affection and respect to those relatives who have lately been summoned to their last solemn account. Scarcely have our tears ceased to flow for the loss of a princess more extensively perhaps, and more unfeignedly beloved through every class of the community than any person of the same rank whose memory is come down to us. Within a few days before the demise of his kind father, a prince of the blood paid the last debt of nature; and surely, as Englishmen and as Christians, we must remember, with the highest satisfaction, that by his good conduct he endeavoured to expiate the frailties of youth, that with a kind of punctuality and sensibility by no means common among princes, he had been anxious to lessen his own personal gratifications for the benefit of his creditors; that within the doors of his own house he was a kind master, a faithful husband, and a tender father; and that in his external intercourse with society he was eminently distinguished as the active and ardent patron of many charitable institutions. And can it be doubted but that the judgment, the feelings, and the habits of a grand-daugh-

ter and a son were to the very best purposes affected by the near view and the frequent contemplation of moral excellence in their illustrious relative?

From the particulars just now stated to you, some practical inferences may be drawn for our own edification. We see that no earthly grandeur can shield the possessor from that stroke of death, to which we are ourselves exposed. We see that a power of bestowing wealth and titles upon favourites or ministers, or heroes, has a less firm hold upon the love and reverence of mankind, than the habitual exercise of virtue. If, then, our sovereign kept a watch over the treacherous or the violent impulses of his passions, we, my brethren, must find, in the contemplation of his self-command, additional motives for shunning sensual excesses. In the ordinary transactions of life, in the structure of a house, in the choice of furniture or situation, in the culture of a farm, or the decorations of a garden, in the purchase of a picture or a statue, and even in the form and colour of a garment, you would find, and be almost vain of finding, increased pleasure, if you could say, that the taste and judgment of a sovereign resembled and had guided your own. But why should you dissemble from yourselves or other men, the honest pride you might feel, that you had been more resolute in struggling with your irregular appetites, because you remembered that they had been successfully resisted by a fellow-creature, more exposed to their assaults than you are accustomed to be in your humbler situation?

Happy, then, most happy will it be for any one of my hearers, if upon meeting the personage whose death we deplore, at the awful tribunal of our common Judge, you, in the hearing of angels, archangels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, should proclaim aloud, that in escaping from many dangerous temptations, in multiplying the comforts of your wives, your children, and your domestics, in promoting habits of temperance and industry among your inferiors, and encouraging your dependants, your neighbours, and your friends to be grateful to their Redeemer, and obedient to their God, you had been animated by the example of your beloved and revered King.

SERMON IX.*

ON THE OPENING OF THE WINDOW IN HATTON CHURCH.

DEUTERONOMY xiii. 1—4.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or dreamer of dreams. For the Lord thy God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

UPON many profound and comprehensive questions which concern the credibility and efficacy of revelation, the authority of the teacher is no less to be kept in view than the truth of the doctrine. Where a proposition is laid down which clashes with our clear and sober conceptions of right, we may justly argue from unsoundness in the precept to imposture in him who delivers it. But the coincidence between a duty presented to us and our previous apprehension of moral rectitude supplies

* June 1794.

no argument, at once direct and decisive, in favour of any extraordinary mission in him, who teaches that duty with precision, or urges it with earnestness. The claim to supernatural authority, being itself extraordinary, must be supported by appropriate and peculiar evidences; and so far as the history of human affairs, or the reflections of the human understanding have hitherto conducted us, that evidence is to be found only in miracles or prophecies, which are themselves a distinct species of miraculous interposition. Wherever, then, a religion, professing to rest on this broad and solid basis of miracles, challenges our belief, it is our right and our duty to examine the proofs by which it is accompanied. But when the validity of those proofs is once admitted, the authority of the teacher is unalterably established, and every pretension that would weaken what he has commanded, or every injunction which contradicts what he has asserted, is to be heard with distrust and jealousy, or rejected with scorn and indignation. We know, indeed, that the facts which he has communicated to us involve no necessary impossibility, and that the rules he has laid down are approved by our moral sense; and this knowledge, according to the general laws of association, may strengthen our confidence. But granting the same advantages to the competitor, allowing his assertions not to be clogged with any higher improbability, and his directions not to be debased by any internal impurity, we are still bound to reject such claims as would destroy the authority of his predecessor, unless we suppose God to be

author, not of peace, but confusion—to have set equivocal marks upon the most unerring truths, and the most pernicious falsehoods—and to have appointed extraordinary dispensations for purposes utterly irreconcileable. Far be it from me to limit the power of God in what he permits and ordains, and as far be it from me and from every rational believer to allow any such instances of permission, and appointment, as subject the righteous Judge of all the earth to the imputation of sporting with our unavoidable weakness, and mocking us even in his appeals to our noblest faculties.

The evidences of natural religion derive much of their lustre and their strength from the regularity of those operations in the physical world, from which we deduce the reality of his existence and the energies of his attributes. To the evidences of revealed religion stability and consistency are equally necessary. What has been said emphatically of our blessed Lord is substantially true of every teacher really employed by the Supreme Being—he is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His authority once confirmed by miracles remains unshaken; and all subsequent appearances, however numerous, and however strong, which tend to invalidate it, will not produce even a momentary suspense of judgment upon a well-informed and well-disciplined mind.

The rites which any belief or religion institutes, may be of a temporary or local nature, and as they were at first obligatory only from direct appointment, of course they may be repealed by proofs

equally clear with those which were primarily exhibited at their institution. But antecedently to such declaration the obligation to obedience continues undiminished. Again, the facts which he affirms must ever be entitled to credit, because we cannot suppose the Deity to employ different agents for the purpose of announcing to his creatures, that the same thing has, and has not existed. Farther still, the moral duties which he has inculcated must ever be binding, because we cannot imagine it possible for the Deity to authorize their violation; and in point of fact, every successive stage of the revelations, which God has made to his creatures, from Moses to Christ, has served only to give a wider scope, and a fuller effect to those duties.

But there is room, doubtless, for accurate and interesting distinction in comparing one part of God's moral government with the other, whether it be of the ordinary and extraordinary kind. And though the existence of resemblance may constitute a strong presumption in favour of several parts, yet the want of such resemblance suggests no absolute proof against any one single part. We may so argue from our knowledge as to compare and admit, but from our ignorance we are not warranted in arguing so far as to reject, because we cannot compare. It must, however, be observed, that no direct contradiction ever can be expected, and that the differences which leave one portion of revelation compatible with another, if in smaller points, can only be circumstantial—if in greater, it must be looked for in addition or illustration. Indeed the very fact of

succession implies either that some new purpose is to be obtained, or that new means are employed for the attainment of some preceding purpose, and that one revelation thus superinduced upon another is itself the very mean which the Deity has appointed. For instance, to fix the Unity of the Godhead was the object of the Jewish revelation; to unfold the doctrine of a future state was the object of the Christian. But Christianity does not oppose what Judaism had made known. On the contrary, it teaches the very same truth; it enforces it by new sanctions, and with multiplied objects of faith, it communicates multiplied directions for practice. Hence Jesus professedly came not to destroy, but to fulfil what had been written by Moses and the prophets; and while he reprobates the traditions, and exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, he bids his disciples remember that they sat in the seat of Moses. Thus the Jewish revelation was preparatory to the Christian, and the Christian is not contradictory, but auxiliary, to the Jewish. They both pursue the great end of moral improvement, and the means used for that end were accommodated to the different situations of the moral agents to whom they were proposed. The authority of Moses, as established by miracles, extended to every part of the law. Before the coming of Christ it was confirmed by a variety of prophets, who endeavoured to invigorate, not to relax the obedience of the people; and after the coming of Christ it was again confirmed in relation to all those duties which, from the essential properties of the things themselves,

and by the express testimony of the teachers, were of perpetual obligation. Here then we have a clear and easy rule to guide us in connecting the authority of a teacher with the qualities of the thing taught.

By a teacher, whom God has really sent forth, it has not been said, ye shall kill, but it has been said by Moses, that ye shall do no murder; and by Christ it has been further said, that he who indulges without cause the passion of anger, which leads to murder, is in danger of the council. It has not been said, ye shall go after Gods, but it has been said again and again, and the saying has been enforced by high degrees of authority in the last and most illustrious teacher, ye shall walk after the Lord your God, ye shall obey his voice, and ye shall love him with all your heart and all your soul. It has never been said, there is no future life; for Moses only omitted what Christ supplied, and as Christ has supplied it, no person who should affirm the contrary by a divine commission would deserve the slightest regard. But upon points which are of a subordinate nature, which derive their importance only from express injunction, and which are evidently subsidiary to higher purposes, we may conceive it possible for their obligation to cease. Thus we justly hold the Sacrament to be expressly ordained for Christians, and we professedly observe that ordinance in obedience to the authority of Christ. But it would be no impeachment of the truth, no affront to the dignity of his religion, if by any succeeding revelation we were permitted not to

observe it. State, however, a stronger case. The Lord is not our God. Thou shalt not love thy neighbour as thyself. The dead will not rise. If a prophet were to give us a sign or a wonder in confirmation of these hideous doctrines, and the sign should come to pass, we must not hearken unto the words of that prophet; we must cleave unto Christ close; we must keep his commandments, and obey his voice. Nothing short of a real miracle would justify us in neglecting even an external ceremony, clearly and explicitly appointed. Not a seeming miracle itself would vindicate us from the imputation of apostacy in admitting more gods than one, in hating our neighbour, in denying that the dead shall be raised up. But from these preliminary observations I shall proceed to a more direct consideration of the text itself, and of the important truths which result from it.

That text formed a part of the service for this day, and, no doubt, must have perplexed the ignorant and alarmed the pious. It contains an injunction which, at first sight, may be thought arduous, not only to the ignorant Jew, but even to a more enlightened Christian. It has supplied one of the most specious objections which the advocates of Deism have ever urged against the truth of Christianity. It has led many sincere believers, and many ingenuous inquirers into confused and dangerous opinions upon the evidence of miracles, and the powers that may be permitted, or even employed to perform them. I mean, therefore, first to explain the text itself, and in the course of that

explanation correct some mistakes that have arisen from it on the general principle of miracles; and, secondly, I shall enforce some practical and salutary considerations which it suggests to us in regulating our faith, in quieting our fears, and enlarging our charity.

Though the events recorded in the book called Deuteronomy fill only the space of six weeks, the views it exhibits to us of the situation of the Jews, the character of Moses, and the providence of God, are highly interesting. The Jewish legislator was doomed not to reach the promised land, which his followers were now approaching, and of which he had holden up to them the most brilliant and captivating descriptions. He knew the fickleness of their judgment and the obduracy of their temper. He foresaw the temptations that might decoy their credulity, and the danger that might stagger their constancy. He, therefore, with wonderful fullness, energy, and pathos, recapitulates the laws by which they were governed; he expatiates upon the interpositions by which they had been preserved, and on them he grounds the necessity of a firm and unshaken attachment to their religion, under all the trials to which they might hereafter be exposed. Had they not witnessed both the terrors and the mercies of God, even their God? Had they not seen a rapid and awful succession of judgments, by which the pride of their foes was at last humbled, and their cruelty had been punished—the plagues of loathsome frogs and destroying locusts—the conversion of water into blood—the boils inflicted

upon the magicians—the destruction of the first-born of men and beasts—of men whose first-born were elevated to the priesthood of idols, whom the Jews were to detest as abominations, and of beasts, many of whom were objects of that very worship, which they were commanded to render to Jehovah alone? Had they not beheld the overthrow of the haughty Egyptian king, and his vindictive hosts, in the Red Sea? Had they not seen the vivid lightnings, heard the tremendous thunderings, and quaked at all the magnificent and terrible scenery, which was displayed at the deliverance of the law on Mount Sinai? These surely were indisputable marks of omnipotence. Had they not been delivered from a galling and disgraceful bondage, where, under the inspection of imperious and savage task-masters, they had been condemned to the drudgery of making bricks, not for any trifling or private purposes, but for aiding those stupendous works which the Egyptians carried on, in making canals through a country artificially intersected by mighty waters? Had they not been protected from the evils that annoyed or overwhelmed their persecutors—from the murrain—from the storm of hail—and from a darkness, as has been sometimes emphatically, though unphilosophically, told you, that may be felt, but a darkness so thick and so black, that they whom it enveloped were unable to see any objects even indistinctly, and were compelled to feel their way amidst the deep and cheerless gloom? When, being hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them, had they not been fed with manna in the wil-

derness, and drunk of the pure and refreshing stream which issued for their sake from the stony rock? Yes; and in all these wonderful events they had proofs, abundant proofs, that He who delivered them with a mighty hand, and a stretched-out arm, was the very God whom Moses had emphatically proclaimed him to be—the great I AM, as we translate the words, though perhaps with more propriety, they signify—I will cause to be.

To abstract and metaphysical conceptions of the Divine Essence the minds of the people of Israel were unlikely to ascend; but of that supreme, undivided power, which made and governed all things, they could form very clear ideas. They had seen many astonishing effects, and therefore it was their duty to stand fast in the belief of him, as the true and the only God,—not merely as the being who had been eminently their protecting God, but as having an exclusive claim to their confidence and obedience, in opposition to all the false deities who were adored by surrounding nations. Such, however, was their proneness to cowardice and revolt, such the perils which they had encountered from the superstitious practices of surrounding countries, and from the artifices of daring impostors who might start up among themselves, that Moses most anxiously guards against every possible evil that might await them, and lays before them such instructions as could not easily be misunderstood—such commands as could not be with impunity disobeyed. He now sets before them one of the very strongest cases in which their revolt from Jehovah could find a plea of extenuation.

Let a prophet arise, or a dreamer of dreams; grant him to tell or promise what might have powerfully seized their attention; grant him even to proclaim his tale as a sign or a token; grant the event exactly to correspond to this prediction; how were they to act in this trying crisis? They were not to hearken unto that prophet; they were to put the prophet or dreamer of dreams to death; they were to walk after the Lord their God, to fear him, to serve him, and cleave unto him. But, you will ask, for what reason? Moses shall give the answer, —because he spake unto them, saying, let us go and serve other gods. Is this the only reason? No; a stronger yet remains, — because he had spoken to turn them from the Lord their God,— from him (as says verse 5.) who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed them from the house of bondage. The doctrine once taught could not be repealed. The miracles so often performed by the being to whom that doctrine pointed, were not to be counteracted by signs and tokens proceeding from false prophets, or dreamers of dreams. The authority of Moses, who taught that doctrine, so confirmed by those miracles, was not to be invalidated by any conformity between such signs and their events, when given by such presumptuous deceivers, for such idolatrous purposes. They knew what Jehovah had performed; they knew what Moses had commanded; and on this knowledge was to be founded a principle that might guard them from every delusion, however specious, and against every claim, however peremptory. The prophet

meant to alienate them from the true God, and in this he was criminal. With justice, therefore, was he to be put to death. But was it not likely that a people so ignorant and unenlightened as the Jews would be much struck with a sign that actually came to pass? Undoubtedly they would; and this is the very circumstance which induced Moses to fortify them against the deceit. Well; but is not the actual accomplishment of the prophet's words a proof that he was really commissioned by some superior power? None at all, when his doctrine directly clashed with the doctrine propounded by Moses; and this I affirm, not merely because the doctrine was true, but chiefly because its truth, or rather the authority of him who pronounced it true, had been supported previously and repeatedly by works which God only could have done. The coincidence in the case of the false prophet, however exact and striking, still might be fortuitous. But in the long train of miracles, which the Israelites had seen, there could be no delusion; about God the author of those miracles there could be no doubt; about the precepts of Moses, the messenger of that God, there could be no mistake. A plain and a sure criterion lay before them, and if they neglected to apply it, they sinned against warning, they sinned against evidence, and therefore they sinned without excuse.

It has, I know, been the opinion of some learned men that Moses here supposes a real miracle to have been worked by these prophets or dreamers of dreams; and to this opinion I give a most un-

equivocal and decided negative. We are told that *oth*, a sign, and *mophet*, a wonder, are applied to the miracles of Moses. Be it so. A miracle is the subject, and a sign the attribute; a miracle is primarily or absolutely the work of God, and secondarily or relatively to human conception it can be expressed by the word sign. But in what sense I would ask? As signs, it is true, of a claim to extraordinary missions; but not as extraordinary acts involving those signs. Now *oth* denotes generally a token or mark in Exodus xii. 13. and corresponds to the Greek word σημειον, a sign. *Mopheth* corresponds to the Greek word τερας, and signifies a wonder in Psalm lxxi. 7.; Isaiah xxii. They are usually applied to such things as point out future events, in various parts of scripture—1 Kings, xiii. 3.; Isaiah, viii. 18. But definitely and excluclusively to miraculous interpositions they are not applied. Equally futile is the distinction between oth and mopheth, for which some men contend, who say that oth signifies what affects men, like the Egyptian plagues, and mopheth, what is subjected to human sight. It was not used of the plague merely as a fact, but as a fact which included a sign, and a sign surely subjected to human view in common with any other sign. This distinction is therefore rejected by Le Clerc and other commentators.

Well; but if Moses did not intend to let his hearers suppose that a real miracle was worked, why did he not inform his readers of the distinction between true miracles and false? By implication, I answer, the distinction is sufficiently made. He does not

say, if a prophet performs a miracle—but if he gives a sign; and this difference, be assured, is very material. He does say, thou shalt not hearken unto him, and this, by implication, conveyed to the minds of the Jews, that a miracle was not worked. In their deliverance from Egypt, and in the awful appearances attending the first proclamation of the law, there were real miracles, and it was their object to secure the belief of this people in one God. Here then they had a manifest and decisive proof, that more Gods were impossible. But is not the correspondence, think you, between the sign and event, an evidence of miraculous interposition? Far from it. The prophet might tell what he thought true, or did not think so; and yet the event might, in the infinitely possible combinations of causes come to pass. He might tell what was near or remote, probable or improbable, and the same coincidence too might exist; and yet, even yet, he might be a gross deceiver.

Two snakes were found in the house of Gracchus; the augurs were consulted, and they said not what would happen if neither snake were sent away, but that the sending forth of the female snake portended the death of Gracchus, and that of the male portended the death of his wife Cornelia. The female was sent away, and Gracchus died. But what is the judicious remark of him who tells the tale? I do not, says he, think the augurs are so very unfortunate, that by chance that should never happen, which they said would happen. Here you have a near event, and the boisterous scenes in which Gracchus was engaged, made it no difficult matter for the soothsayers to predict his death.

Now I will give you several instances of events more remote, and more unlikely, and therefore carrying a stronger proof, if possible, of real prophecy. An omen of twelve vultures fixed the name of Rome to its founder, instead of the name of his brother and rival. Many years after, this very omen was said by Valens, as we know on the authority of the most learned Roman, Varro, to prefigure the continuance of the Roman Empire twelve hundred years. That empire did continue that time, and the interpretation of Valens preceded the destination of the empire five hundred years. The mind of Valens was strongly impressed with the number; it was infected probably with the superstitions of his countrymen. It passed, by an easy transition, from the foundation to the subversion of his city. It told what was true, but that which could not be known, for it was collected from the very art which in many instances had deceived the speaker, and in this one instance it had no particular marks of credibility to distinguish it from other instances, some right, some wrong, and all dependent on unknown causes. If the augur had come forth from the strong holds of generalities, and had descended into the open field of particulars; if he had said that Huns from Asia, Vandals from Africa, and Goths from Europe, should overthrow this mighty fabric; if, without mentioning the names, he had pourtrayed the character of an Alaric or a Genseric; if he had described the Christian religion as triumphing over the wretched remains of Paganism; if he had spoken of the means

as well as the end—of the circumstances as well as the event; if, above all, he had connected them with some moral and religious purpose of transcendental moment, then, and then only, would a judicious reasoner be persuaded to believe that his prediction could arise from any preternatural aid.

I will now give you a second instance of surprising coincidence. In a writer who lived in the time of Nero, there is a series of verses evidently representing the discovery of the new world in America. The state of navigation and astronomy did not warrant those expressions, and yet no man seriously believes that Seneca was a prophet, or meant to be considered by others as invested with the prophetical office. Our imagination is delighted with the resemblance between what he wrote and what Columbus achieved, but upon our reason it takes no hold. Seneca wrote them as a poet, but he wrote them in the form of a prophecy, and the event exactly answered; for Columbus, fourteen hundred years afterwards, made the very discovery.*

---

* A pious and most learned writer in our own Country wrote thus:

When America shall cease to send forth its treasure,
But employs it at home for American pleasure,
When the new world shall the old invade,
Nor count them their lords, but their fellows in trade.

The prophet has been his own interpreter, and the substance of his interpretation is this: When America shall be better civilized, it may come to pass, they will no longer suffer their treasures of gold and silver to be sent to maintain the luxury of Europe, but employ it in great undertakings, magnificent

If the Israelites had not seen the mighty works of God, in their helpless state of ignorance, they

---

structures, or in war or expeditions of their own. This has not yet happened. But what shall we say to the next ages? When America shall be so well civilized and peopled, and divided into kingdoms, they are like to have so little regard to their originals as to acknowledge no subjection to them. They may have a distinct commerce between themselves, or independently of Europe; and may hostilely assault them, even as the Greek and Roman colonies after a long time dealt with their original countries. Much of this has come to pass; and was the writer then a prophet? No;—hear his account of his own prediction: "I take no pleasure," says he, "in prophecies pointing at future things from a pretended spirit of divination. I present you with a very different kind of prediction—not positively or peremptorily telling you what *shall* come to pass, yet pointing at things, not without all reason or probability of their events—not built upon fatal decrees or inscrutable designations, but upon conjectural foundations, whereby things wished for may be promoted, and such as are feared may more probably be prevented." Here, then, you have the real value of all such predictions fairly estimated, in the language of a true and honest man. But suppose some doctrine to have been connected with his words—should we therefore believe him inspired? No; the doctrine itself shall be true, and yet his inspiration will not be the consequence. But what shall we say, if the doctrine include any proposition dangerous to good morals, or contrary to the plain and express contents of revelation? In both cases he would have been an impostor, and in the latter case, not only his guilt in prophesying, but ours in believing the prophecy, would have been greater. His prophecy did not weaken the testimony of former miracles; and former miracles having established the truth of Christianity cannot be impaired by any subsequent agreement between signs and events, which, however unusual, must not upon that account be pronounced supernatural, and which could not be supernatural, because at variance with other and preceding signs and events confessedly supernatural.

might have been pardoned for not believing in Jehovah—if they had not been furnished with powerful reasons for that belief, they might have been excusable perhaps for imitating the polytheism of the Gentiles. But the ground of that disbelief could not be the sign given them by a prophet, or dreamer of dreams, because it had come to pass. The rejection of the authority of Moses must have preceded the admission of the authority of the false prophet; and though an event, coming to pass as he had foretold it, may appear a strong reason, yet a much stronger was necessary to justify the Israelites in their previous renunciation of that religion which Moses had taught. That there should be one God, and that there are more Gods than one, are propositions evidently incompatible; and to believe that there were more than one, because the words of a dreamer of dreams had been fulfilled, would have been an act of folly as well as impiety—inasmuch as miracles acting as signs yet more unequivocal, and causes productive of effects far more extraordinary, had before been employed to convince them that there was only one God.

The question which I have just now stated, why did not Moses give his people some test to determine between miracles of false and true prophets, rests upon the supposition that false prophets ever have worked miracles—a supposition most precarious in itself, most unauthorized by scripture, and replete with difficulties far more stubborn than those which it was designed to solve. That such a power is hypothetically, or by implication contained in the text, is generally

imagined; and I would ask why? Moses states a fact, and a very possible fact, that a dreamer of dreams should predict an event, and that his prediction should come to pass. But does he tell us that this prediction was the result of any supernatural inspiration? No. Does he even ascribe it to uncommon sagacity? No. Whether it arose from sagacity or inspiration, the impression it would make on such a credulous people was likely to be great and pernicious; and against the consequences of that impression in alienating their minds from Jehovah, he directs the peremptory and solemn injunction of not hearkening unto the prophet, and of cleaving unto the Lord. If, indeed, Moses had affirmed, or even granted that a deceiver could be capable of working a miracle, then, doubtless, it would have been requisite for him to enter upon a new series of reasons, and to lay down some criterion for discrimination between the miracles of a true and a false prophet. But he has neither affirmed nor granted the possibility of a miracle; he only states a case, which in all probability would happen among a people yet prone to superstition; and it is a case, remember, which by no means requires either divine inspiration, or extraordinary human wisdom. It was simply to say, that something should happen, which did happen; and who will deny that the most ignorant impostor might be lucky enough in some case or other to effect this?

Let us now suppose the Jewish legislator to have given some tests. Must he have made the difference between what affected the Jews as a nation, or

what affected them as individuals? Must he have pointed at the success of good, or the sufferings of bad men? If he admits one, why should he exclude the other? And if he admits both, how, under a law, the sanctions of which were professedly temporal, how should the Israelites distinguish between that which happened according to the false prophet's prediction, and that which, independently of such prediction, and antecedently to it, they were themselves taught to expect in the course of human affairs, administered under the theocracy which was peculiar to their situation? Again, suppose the test to be measured by nearness or remoteness—who shall fix the meaning of the terms? To one class of events Moses must have assigned a year, to others a month, to others a larger or a smaller portion of time; and would there have been no danger of error in applying so long and varied a catalogue to the promises of impostors? Take, then, the question in any point of view, and you will find that Moses, instead of wearying his hearers with the multiplicity, or confounding them by the diversity of rules, has proceeded in a more intelligible and satisfactory manner. He refers the Israelites to a doctrine which they understood and had allowed. He reminds them of miracles which they had seen and remembered. Whatever clashed with those doctrines, whatever opposed those miracles, was indubitably false and wicked. He warned them, that opposition would arise, and gave them the clearest, the most simple, and the most salutary directions for adhering to their religion and preserving their innocence.

Permit me now to request your attention to some other considerations, which, however paradoxical they may appear on a superficial glance, are, I know pertinent and solid. Miracles have been judiciously distributed into two classes—into such effects as could not by any natural means be produced, such as the resurrection of a dead man—or into effects which, though in themselves such as might be produced naturally, yet in a certain manner, or under certain circumstances, could not be produced without divine agency. Mark the result; when the former effect is attested, upon good evidence, the credibility of the fact so attested establishes the credibility of the miracle. If it happened at all, it must happen miraculously. But when effects of the second class are ascribed to invisible powers, we must not content ourselves with the facts; we must not say that it did happen, and therefore was miraculous; but we must inquire how it was miraculous—how an effect in appearance ordinary should proceed from causes really extraordinary; and then we must severely scrutinize the evidence, because the witnesses misled by ignorance, seduced by credulity, or urged by secular motives, may have ascribed to supernatural interposition, what really was produced by the agency of causes merely natural. The credibility of the fact here weakens the credibility of the miracle.

Let us apply this to prophecies; an event is predicted quite different from the usual state of human affairs, and apparently transcending the extent of human agency; it comes to pass; we have such testimony as justifies us in believing that it

has come to pass; the fact is indissolubly connected with the miracle. The very circumstance which lessened the probability before it happened increases the probability when it has happened, and points out inspiration as the only adequate cause of the prophecy. But suppose the prediction to relate, as I really believe all false predictions do, to such events as can be contrived by human skill, and executed by human power, or at least such as fall within the ordinary and visible operations of nature—to the fall of an empire—to the defeat of an army—to the death of a friend—to the birth of a child, or any other of the events we see every day. It has been predicted; it has come to pass. Granted;—but will you not say, that it may have come to pass by ordinary causes? May you not admit the fact, without admitting the prophecy? Will you not require something more than the bare testimony of the speaker to convince you, that he foresaw as well as foretold? Will you argue in a circle, and say, that the fact proves the prophecy, and the prophecy ascertained the fact?

Here then we may introduce the just observation which is made in his book upon Laws, by that great writer whose expressions in his book upon Divination I have before produced.—"Our own republic, all kingdoms, and all people, are full of examples, that many things have fallen out true, according to the predictions of augurs." Yet this very writer held the whole system of augury in avowed contempt, and with matchless ability has laid bare its fooleries and its frauds.*

* De Legibus, lib. ii.

I tell you, says our Lord, John xiii. 19, before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. What was the event? The treachery of Judas. Now this was possible; though, after the amiable example, the gracious instructions, the endearing counsels, the stupendous works of Jesus, such abandoned, profligate barbarity in one of his immediate followers was not very probable. When it did come to pass, would the Apostles have considered the words of their Master as a prophecy, merely because he foretold it? No, surely. Why then was it a prophecy? Because announced by a person whom they had before seen, and after seen in the very act of cleansing the leper, of giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb—because it was a link in that long extended chain of prophecies which related to the death of the Messiah—because it had an adequate object, as well as a sufficient agent—because it was in concurrence with other prophecies and other miracles, to prove, as our Lord subjoins, that—I am he. Separated from these circumstances, it might be true, and not prophetical; combined with those circumstances, it assumes the full energy, the proper characteristic, the irresistible authority of a real prophecy.

I have found occasion more than once to assert, that every hypothesis granting to false prophets the power of working miracles, or issuing divine predictions, is not only shocking to reason, but repugnant to Scripture; and as the Israelites were acquainted with transactions which give the best air

of probability to such an hypothesis, I will stop a little to examine them. Moses and Aaron were engaged in a contest with the magicians, when his rod was turned into a serpent, when frogs were brought, when water was turned into blood, and when the magicians are generally supposed to have wrought similar transformations. Now the magic art has been curiously divided into the natural, the artificial, and the diabolical. The first, we are told, lies within the verge of nature, and men skilled in natural philosophy have performed, what vulgar superstition has ascribed to the influence of superior agents. Of the second we hear that it was mere sleight of hand, and that no miracle can be involved in it, except according to the abject and crooked ideas of the ignorant. But for the third a larger sphere has been opened, and it has been gravely taught that evil spirits have leagued with necromancers and wizards to decoy the unwary and scare the timid. Now the miracles supposed to be worked by the Egyptians are assigned to this latter class. Moses, we are told, hints no difference between what was done by himself and the magicians when they threw down the rods. The transformation in both cases was not appearance, but reality. The only difference was, that Moses ultimately shewed his superiority. It is said, the magicians could turn water into blood; they could not restore it, like Moses, to its native colour. Though they produced frogs, they could not remove them; though they could change their rods into serpents, they could not prevent those rods from being swallowed up—

they could not protect their own persons from the plague of boils—they could not raise a storm of hail and thunder—nor did they even attempt to imitate this one signal miracle. Thus the dispute is supposed to lie, not between preternatural and natural powers, but between the greater and less powers, both preternatural—the greater exerted for the honour of the God of Israel, and the less for the honour of the idols of Egypt. God, says Sherlock, thought proper to exert himself in such acts of power as should demonstrate his superiority above the gods of the heathens. But he is mistaken.

Now Moses does not hold the same language of himself and the magicians. He does not say, the magicians "*did that thing*," or, according to what he did, so did they—a strong and definite form of speech very frequent in the Mosaic writings; but he uses a more vague word—they did "so," or in like manner, where a mere external resemblance will answer the sense of the word, as well as of the context. Nay, Moses uses this phrase for a fruitless attempt—they did so, to bring forth lice, but they could not. From this phraseology proceed we to another; for Moses expressly calls their work *belatchem*, from *lam*, to hide,—enchantments, or secret modes of deceptions, and false appearances, secret sleights and jugglings. Here plainly and solely human artifices are expressed.

Now let us take the facts separately. The Egyptians, as we know from ancient and modern writers, employed serpents in their magical arts; they extracted their teeth, they made them tracta-

ble, and with great skill may be supposed to have conveyed away their rods, and suddenly produced their serpents. Aaron cast down his rod before Pharoah and his servants. This was open. The magicians cast down their rods, and this was secret; for they became serpents by the *belatchem*, or covered arts. Again, in turning the water into blood, they dug, it seems, round the river, and by chemical preparations might easily change its colour. But Moses turned *whole* streams into blood, which the magicians did not; and the fish died, which is an effect recorded of Moses, but not of the magicians. Again, as to the frogs, it was easy to procure them, as they abounded in Egypt; but they were not removed by the magicians, as they were by Moses.

And, after all, if evil spirits were permitted to aid, it is strange that their operations should be confined to so few instances, and exerted with such equivocal appearances, all of which may easily be solved on the supposition of mere human contrivance. But the magicians themselves shall decide the controversy as to demoniacal influence; for on the last miracle they exclaim, "this is the finger of God," evidently implying, that in all their former efforts they looked upon themselves as engaged in a mere trial of skill; and to such a trial they were designedly summoned by Pharoah himself; who, suspecting the first miracles of Moses to be within the reach of magic, had sent for his sorcerers to oppose what he thought artifice to artifice; and who, in the success of the Egyptians, meant to find a plea for spurning the pretended Jehovah, in whose name

Moses had demanded leave for the Israelites to go, and for persisting in his former refusal with a show of justice. Not one expression is dropped, as if the contest lay between the gods of Egypt and the God of Israel. The miracles of Moses were opposed to the tricks of the sorcerers. The supreme authority of God was opposed to the stubborn and despotic spirit of Pharoah. Indeed, the genius of idolatry excluded such a contest: for while each nation held its own tutelary deities, they rarely supposed the one to interfere with the other; and in case of supposed opposition, they endeavoured, not, like Pharoah, to exasperate and defy the powers which protected their foes, but to propitiate them, and to convert them to their own side by mystic ceremonies of evocation.

Here then you see the futality of that distinction for which even the candid and philosophical Mr. Locke is thus an advocate. Since no opposition, says he, can be equal to God's power; since his honour and goodness will not permit his messenger and his truth to be borne down by the appearance of greater power on the side of imposture and in favour of lie,—whenever there is opposition, the signs which carry evident marks of a greater power will be an evidence, that the truth of a divine mission is where they appear. He adds, though the discovery, how the lying wonders can be produced, be beyond the capacity often, and the conception even of the most knowing spectator, yet he cannot but know, they are not seals set by God, since they are opposed by miracles which carry the evident

marks of a superior power, and therefore cannot shake the authority so supposed.

But your own sense will inform you how difficult it must be often for ignorant men to measure the less effect with the greater; how different will be their opinions upon facts, each of which supposes human or natural powers; how often their humours, or their prejudices, or their interests, would draw them aside in preferring the less to the greater. Reason surely says, that if no miracle can be worked for falsehood, and many are worked for truth, the decision will be made more securely; and revelation fortunately contains no one specific case in which miracles ever were performed by evil spirits for the defence of a lie. If the language of Christ, when he said—by whom do your sons cast out demons—be urged in answer to this position, I reply, that here and elsewhere our Lord uses an argument ad hominem; he means to convict the Jews of error and impiety even upon their own principles. He means to say, that, even upon those principles, Beelzebub had no such power, or would not exert it against his own kingdom; and that, if the Jews ascribed the works of their exorcists to the finger of God, they should have ascribed his works to the same cause—they could not, without inconsistency and malignity, impute them to the agency of evil spirits. He does not say that evil spirits had such power, but that the Jews, supposing them to have it, reasoned inconclusively and perversely in maintaining that it was put forth on the side of truth. When, therefore, it is maintained that Almighty

God only can reveal future events, or produce preternatural effects, we have the most perfect security for deciding what he foretells, and what he performs. We are no longer perplexed with the claims of rival powers superior to man; we do not subject the Lord of the Universe to disgraceful contests with idols and demons; we find in this, as in other parts of the moral world, that the opposition to truth and virtue exists in the agency of man alone—in man presuming to set up his idle sorceries against the outstretched arm of Heaven—in man interpreting fantastic dreams, and forging precarious predictions, to delude and corrupt the incautious and the unenlightened.

These sorceries have been practised; these predictions have been uttered; and against both of them we hold up the strong shield of faith, and may wield triumphantly the most approved weapons of reason. The law of Moses to punish witchcraft was, therefore, most wise, because witchcraft was likely to be attempted, and even with success, among his credulous people; and most just, because the object for which it was to be employed would be to alienate their hearts from Jehovah, and to draw them after other Gods. Many of the acts both of magic and divination were founded on idolatry. Every magician was an idolator; his crime was high and aggravated treason against the Jewish state, over which Jehovah presided as the supreme governor; his punishment was instantaneous and ignominious death.

But if the Jews were in such danger from mere

human artifices, how would that danger have been increased if we should admit evil spirits to have the power of seducing them? How necessary would it have been for Moses to distinguish, and enable his followers to distinguish, between the less deceit employed by man, and the greater employed by demons? But he has not made any such distinction, and the plain inference is, because there was no room for making it,—because the demons, about whom he is silent, neither inspired prophecies nor worked miracles,—because false prophets and dreamers of dreams, about whom he is not silent, often pretended to both.

But I must again entreat you to observe, that the appeal is made by Moses not merely to the truth of the doctrine, but to the display of the miracles God had performed in bringing them from the land of Egypt. Philosophy and experience perfectly harmonize with revelation. Human reason, especially in an unenlightened state, may often be perplexed as to the argumentative proofs of doctrine. The Jews were not, and but few religious men are, capable of deciding on the subtleties that may be used to support the cause of many gods against the belief of one; and, in point of fact, men ever have been prone to adopt the tenets and practise the rites of polytheism. But of miracles repeatedly and evidently addressed to their senses—of such miracles as the Jews are recorded to have seen, they are competent judges, and a doctrine confirmed by them has the very strongest testimony that can be required for truth; and if that doctrine proclaims

only one God, he that would invite a people to follow after "other gods" strikes at the supreme and fundamental principle which those miracles were intended to establish, and therefore his pretensions were to be resisted as soon as announced. They have not a claim even to examination on the footing of reason; and in respect to morality, their tendency is so pernicious as to provoke our just and vehement indignation.

As miracles and prophecy are evidently calculated to procure immediate credit,—as they constitute an evidence adapted to the common sense and feelings of mankind, surely we ought not to suppose hastily that they can be worked, even by Divine permission, in confirmation of error. For to what does the supposition amount? That the very strongest and important mark which can be affixed to truth, may also be affixed to falsehood. This statement is just as well as pointed, and would be of itself sufficient to overthrow many popular hypotheses, if presumption had not been opposed to fact, and interpretations of Scripture had not darkened the records of Scripture itself. Pray consider, revealed religion consists of facts recorded and commands imposed;—what, then, is beyond the commission of a Divine teacher? He cannot convert wrong into right, or falsehood into truth. What falls within his office, or rather belongs to it, and even distinguishes it? Two points, say I; which relate, the one to faith, the other to practice, and which are too often confounded when we use the word doctrine. He can make a fact credible which before was improbable. This may

be called a speculative doctrine, if you please, though it may rather deserve the name of historical. Again, he makes a moral observance more obligatory than it was before, by adding the sanctions of future to temporal rewards, by pointing at new degrees and new circumstances, in which it is to be practised, by combining that which God through his messenger commands with that of which man of himself approves. In both these offices he confirms truth, though in different acceptations of the word. He confirms a fact, or physical truth, by revealing it; he confirms a duty, or moral truth, by propounding and enforcing it.

In the text it is said, that the Israelites should not follow after other Gods; and as this implies the truth of a doctrine which teaches one God, it may be supposed that the doctrine itself was a sufficient evidence against all false pretenders. Yes, certainly; if considered as a doctrine itself confirmed primarily by miracles, and mediately by the authority of Moses. But, in a general point of view, I must contend that no speculative doctrine is immediately established by miracles. If it be such as reason, under the circumstances, can ascertain, miracles are unnecessary,—if such as our reason rejects, they will be useless,—if such as reason binds up in a state of suspense, we, on the commonly received opinion, may be equally in doubt who was the author. What then do they confirm? I answer, the Divine mission of the teacher; and, through his authority, doubtless, the doctrine itself. But if you make the doctrine the test of the miracle, and the

miracle the test of the doctrine, you argue in a circle. If you judge of the miracle by the doctrine, you set the thing to be ultimately proved above the proof itself. If you make the miracle the proof of the doctrine, you must obtain the proof through the authority of the teacher; and this is the constant and solid language of the Scriptures. Did our Lord work miracles to prove immediately and specifically any one of his moral precepts, as that you should love your neighbour,—or any of his sublime doctrines, as that the dead should rise? No; their intention was to prove that he was the promised Messiah,—that he had a commission from Heaven; and this being once admitted, the consequence evidently follows, that what he reveals is true,—that what he commands is right,—that what he threatens must be feared,—that what he promises ought to be most ardently desired, and most diligently pursued.

What then must we say is the peculiar efficacy of miracles? To establish the authority of a Divine instructor. What are the instructions laid down by those, by whom the history of our holy religion states miracles to have been accomplished? To the Jews, I answer, that great doctrine, which is the true basis of all pure morality, all vital piety, all rational belief, all sound philosophy,—the being, not of a deity, but of one deity alone, with perfections infinite, and power undivided, uncontrolable, and supreme. To the Christian, not merely the existence and providence of God is asserted, but such an extensive and righteous scheme of moral government as shall correct all the irregularities of this

imperfect and transient state—such a glorious and exalted scheme of voluntary mercy as will not only convey to us the reward of our personal merits in another and a better life, but exalt us to that felicity which, being the free gift of God announced to us by Christ, is to continue without the slightest interruption, perhaps with progressive increase, for ever and for ever. Here then you have views entirely worthy of extraordinary interposition; and he that, pretending to the interpretation of dreams, or the foresight of futurity, would call you away from your reverence to God, or your faith in Jesus, is a deceiver, unto whom you ought not to hearken, if you love the truth—to whom you will not hearken, if you really love the Lord your God.

In order to secure your faith, and through faith your obedience, miracles and prophecy have been appointed. If you say that your understandings would be perplexed by the words of a prophet, whose words should come to pass, oppose to this single event, which may be the effect of chance, the numerous instances, and, let me add, the connected system of Scriptural prophecies. If not only one or two had occurred—if several had occurred, and yet had avoided all detail; nay, if a greater number had been found, and those applicable to single independent events, dispersed promiscuously through the world, and effected by natural causes for temporal ends, then, I grant, the argument from predictions might have been dubious and unsatisfactory. But if the predictions be numerous,—if delivered with great minuteness,—and particularly if they all

more or less respect one common subject,—if they profess to have their completion in one person,—if the history of that person corresponds to those predictions, delivered by different speakers, and at different times, and with different degrees of obscurity or perspicuity,—then most assuredly we have an illustrious evidence in favour of our redemption by Jesus Christ. The first case, says a most learned prelate, in which miracles, and of course prophecies are to be expected, is when God employs any upon an extraordinary message, to be credentials to confirm their Divine commission. Now many are the prophecies pointing to Christ, many the miracles ascribed to him; and if it be said that, because he taught no moral duty which reason could not have discovered and approved, there is little worthy of attention in his religion, even granting it to be true, let us hear how a wise and eloquent man addresses such objectors: "If Jesus Christ had delivered no other declaration than this—the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation,—still he had pronounced a message of inestimable importance—a message worthy of that splendid apparatus of miracles and prophecies with which his mission was introduced and attested—a message in which all honest men would rejoice to find an answer to their doubts and rest to their inquiries." And who among you will oppose to the Gospel of Christ the paltry artifices of selfish jugglers, or the fantastic chimeras of pre-

tended prophets? If the Jew, after the miracles in Egypt, in the Wilderness, and on Mount Sinai, was not to follow other gods and renounce Jehovah, shall the Christian be estranged from his belief of a resurrection, not only as taught by the authority of Jesus, but as accomplished in his person, when, by a miracle so generally consistent with the scheme of our redemption, and so peculiarly apposite to its ultimate design, Christ himself became the first fruits of them that slept?

It remains for me just to state an objection, which the Jews have grounded on the words of the text, and which it becomes me more especially to refute, as I contend so firmly for the authority of religion once established. The Jews urge the very words of my text in opposition to the truth of Christianity. Christ, they say, worked, as you contend, miracles, or delivered prophecies;—but he was a false teacher, because he came to overset the law, and Moses, in the text, warns us against such teachers, and pronounces them worthy of death. But the cases are in no respect parallel. In the text we have a mere dreamer of dreams, who tells only one or more events which come to pass. Jesus did many wonderful works; he uttered many prophecies; in healing the sick, he directed them all to the glory of God; he did not call the people away from the worship of Jehovah; he bade them, in the very words of Moses, love the Lord their God with all their heart and all their soul; he not only admits the prophetic office of Moses, but even appeals to it; he not only obeyed the authority of

Moses, but confirms it. He worked, indeed, more miracles, he taught more truths,—but addition is not subversion, difference is not contradiction, enlargement is not contamination. What, then, did he repeal? The ceremonial part. True; and had not the prophets gradually shaken it, and taught the Jews to set less and less value upon it, in opposition to moral works? Is not the word *olam*, for ever, more or less extensive in its signification, which must be determined by the occasion? and is not this confessed even by Maimonides himself? (p. 21.) Was there not a gradual progress in Divine revelation from the beginning of the world; and has not the Deity attempered it to the age and growth of his creatures? Though man, mere man, was forbidden to add thereto, or diminish from it, by the guidance of his own wisdom, did the prohibition extend to all such as God might appoint for that purpose? Is it not confessed that many of the original precepts had a respect to the superstitions of the Sabians; and can they be binding or efficacious when that superstition has ceased to exist?

Though sophistry weave its subtleties, though fanaticism broods over its chimeras, though bigotry clings to its prejudices, though dogmatism fulminates its decisions, common sense will sometimes, in matters of opinion, in a still small voice, assert its rights, just as in matters of practice conscience is roused from its slumbers, and vindicates the unwritten law of the heart in a louder and sterner tone. David ate the shew-bread: was he punished according to the law? No; hunger procured his

pardon, even in the minds of the Jews. An anomalous passover was observed by Hezekiah: was he blamed for it? No; the necessity of the case, and the rectitude of his intention, constituted his vindication. Nay, the Jewish writers themselves have supposed some few cases in which the ceremonial law may be dispensed with; and why should they object to Jesus what themselves have done, without the power of prophecies and miracles? But the whole objection, as we have before seen, proceeds on false assumptions; and enough has been said to evince the futility of its application, and the perverseness of its authors.

Having thus explained to you the text, I shall proceed to state very concisely a few practical observations; first, such as to regulate your faith. You see, then, that God only conveys to good men, and for good purposes, the power of foreseeing future events, and therefore you will turn a deaf ear to all the idle and mischievous pretences of those who would misguide you, as interpreters of dreams and omens. What they say may be more or less probable; but, if it should prove true, yet they have no distinct previous knowledge of its truth. Indeed they usually affect to wrap up their meaning in splendid and awful obscurity, which confounds their hearers, and they leave the interpretation to the fears and hopes, the precipitation and superstition of those whom they have deluded.

It becomes you to believe in God alone, and not to suppose that any other being, unless specifically appointed by him, can be a prophet. It is said re-

peatedly that his miracles were worked in Egypt, that all the people of the earth might know the hand of Jehovah, that it is mighty. He maintained the cause of Israel at all times, that all the people of the earth might know that Jehovah is God, and that there is none else. But Moses, in the 18th of Deuteronomy, ascribes the prophecies condemned in the text to the presumption of the prophet; Jeremiah calls them the vision of his own heart; Ezekiel describes such impostors as prophecying out of their own hearts, and following their own spirit, and having seen nothing; Isaiah says, they prophecy unto you a false vision and the deceit of their own heart. As Moses foretold that dreamers of dreams should arise, whose words would come to pass; so Christ told his disciples, that false Christs and false prophets would arise, and shew great signs and wonders. But you, as well as the Jews, have a plain rule to guide you; they were to abide by the Law, and you by the Gospel. This warning should prepare you all for trials; it is intended so to prepare you, and in times of public calamity, when the passions of men are violently agitated and every idle word, without any support from argument or any decorations from genius, uttered we know not when or why, is distorted into a prophecy, sometimes of disastrous change and sometimes of splendid triumph, the caution I give you is peculiarly necessary. "Produce your cause," we may say, with Isaiah; "bring forth your strong reasons; shew us things for to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods. Yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed.

But behold ye are nothing, and your word is nought."

You will farther observe, that the text addresses itself to the moral as well as the intellectual condition of the hearers. The Israelites were not only tempted as to whether they believed in God, but whether they loved him with all their heart and their soul; and in truth, your own faith, unless united with sincerity of principle, and forms of piety, will not secure you against the crafty impostor or the visionary enthusiast. But if you love and obey God, as well as worship him, then will you despise all the absurd and delusive words of pretended prophets.

In the second place, let me quiet your fears by assuring you, that no evil spirits whatsoever are permitted to destroy your happiness, or to supply artful men with a knowledge of future events. All the Gods of the nations, says Jeremiah, are idols or nothings. They are all vanity, says another prophet. They are altogether brutish and foolish; they are a doctrine of vanities. It was the boast of the Epicureans that they rescued men from false and groundless apprehensions. But it is the higher boast of Christianity to teach you whom alone you ought to fear, and at the same time to dissipate all gloomy and unauthorized dread as to the agency of invisible beings. Though earthly empires are convulsed, though calamities and afflictions gather round you in private life, though the skies blacken, the tempests rage, and the elements are on fire, yet these are the operations of God alone; and if you love

him with all your heart and all your soul, you will not be cast down in the hour of danger.

The last remark I have to make is, that the text suggests a very important consideration for enlarging our charity. Under the Jewish theocracy, a false prophet, as I before told you, must have intended to introduce idolatry, and was consequently a traitor to the state, as well as a deceiver and a corrupter of the people. He was therefore to be stoned to death; and we find three cases in the Jewish writers where the punishment might be inflicted—when he prophecied what he had not heard—when he prophecied that which was revealed not to him, but to another—when he prophecied in the name of an idol. Against all these crimes Moses had provided; and indeed we learn that in other states, magical rites were holden in just detestation; and it is recorded of a Roman Emperor that, at a time, when the country had been torn by intestine divisions, and the multitude were prone to adopt superstitious conceits, and to be hurried away by factious sorcerers, he wisely appointed the most severe punishment for such offenders. Be it so. He that pretends to a commission from heaven, which he has not received; he that employs bad means for a bad end; he that by interpreting dreams and scattering prophecies, would draw off the people from their allegiance to God, or inflame them into rebellion against the laws of their country, deserves not only reprobation from good and wise men, but exemplary and rigorous chastisement from the magistrate, who is not to bear the sword in vain. Let us remember

that the injunction of Moses is limited to one strong and clear case. The severity is pointed against voluntary, not involuntary offence—against deliberate guilt, not unavoidable infirmity—against the depravity of the heart, not against the errors of the understanding. He that gave a different interpretation of the law from other teachers; he that proposed a dogma really false—if he did not rush into treason and idolatry—if he did not pretend to be divinely inspired—if he did not endeavour to draw away the giddy multitude from the belief and love and worship of the true God, was not worthy of death. He might err, and his error was to be confuted; he might falsify, and his falsehood was to be detected and exposed; but his liberty and his life were not to be destroyed.

Hence let us learn to think charitably of those who do not agree with us in their opinions upon speculative and abstruse points of doctrine. Despise we may and resist the sorcerer and the dreamer of dreams, but we must not deprecate the talents, nor vilify the characters of those, whom we suppose to be in error, merely because they dissent from that which we have been accustomed to think true. Where the truth lies between contending parties may be known only to God. But our salvation cannot be endangered, if we ourselves, and they who differ from us hold the faith in unity of spirit, the bond of peace, and righteousness of life. Calumny and persecution even in the best cause must be offensive in the sight of heaven. But an humble and charitable spirit cannot fail of its

reward; it is the best security against the impostures of those who labour to lead us astray by their interpretation of dreams and signs and tokens; it is the surest proof, that we love the Lord our God, with all our heart and all our soul.

SERMON X.*

ON THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF LABOUR.

PROVERBS xiv. 23.

In all labour there is profit.

To a being encompassed by so many wants, and harassed by so many inconveniences, as man, reflection would naturally suggest some inquiry into the ends for which he was originally exposed to them, and the means by which he may be preserved from them most effectually. But in the progress of philosophical refinement, an easy passage is opened for transition from the ideal exclusion of misery to the ideal consummation of happiness. Hence the ingenuity of conjecture, and the splendour of eloquence, have been employed in researches about the supreme good. Some there are who would place it in a complete exemption from labour; and, by that irresistible propensity we feel to transfer all ideas of excellence from ourselves to superior natures, they have represented the perfection of the Divinity as consisting in serenity and inaction, in

* Sept. 1793.

the absence of exertion, and of that inquietude by which they assumed that exertion must be accompanied. Others, of more exalted spirits and nobler views, would confine happiness to speculation alone, and have stated every advance of man in knowledge as an approach to the Divine Archetype.

Now, without imputing rashness or negligence to either class of these reasoners, we may confidently pronounce that they have fallen into great mistakes, both in respect to God and to man; to God, when they would do him honour,—to man, when they would guide him to felicity. In regard to the Deity, we are led up to the knowledge of his very being by the signs of active power and active wisdom displayed in his works; and though, perhaps, it were presumptuous in weak and fallible creatures like ourselves to determine peremptorily in what the happiness of our Creator does consist, we may safely affirm in what it does not; and surely the scenes by which we are surrounded, the various orders of inanimate, and the successive generations of animated beings, the earth on which we tread, the heavens which we behold, are so many illustrious proofs that he acts as well as exists, and that, while his existence is without limits, his works are beyond calculation. By analogy, then, we might be led to conclude that the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon action; and, indeed, that it does so depend may be shewn by the more direct and satisfactory evidence of facts.

Before we can stretch our understanding to any comprehensive and exalted subjects of speculation,

we must have made some efforts for the preservation and comfort of life. The objects of that speculation themselves, are often series of causes and effects by which life is produced or continued; and whatever praise be due to those who engage in the most profound and abstruse researches, yet the science of morality is of all others the most important; because the most connected with ourselves, with the right use of our powers, and the known materials of our happiness. Indeed, our moral and our intellectual faculties are not merely quiescent modes of existence to be explored in the dark recesses of abstraction. They are energies, which the exigencies of life call forth every hour, in every situation. They pervade the whole extent of our volitions and intellectual exertions, from the first glimmering of instinct to the full splendour of reason. In all their combinations, and under all their aspects, they imply labour of some mind or other, and in some degree or other they are attended with happiness or the desire of being happy.

For the purpose then of illustrating the proposition contained in my text, I shall first lay before you some remarks upon man as intended for labour, and through labour for happiness, by the very frame of his nature; secondly, I shall point out various proofs both of the profit derived from labour, and of the mischiefs resulting from the want of it in a state of society; and, thirdly, I shall apply such observations as may be suggested by the two foregoing heads, to the very useful and laudable purpose for which you are now assembled.

Having twice published my opinions on the utility of Charity Schools, and having since those publications been twice called upon to preach in behalf of them, I really have found some difficulty in taking a different view of the subject, and in bringing forward any matter which had not occurred to me before.

This consideration will I hope be my excuse with you for the present choice of topics; and if these topics should appear to any of you too confined and partial, permit me to remind you that the beneficial effects of labour are peculiarly interesting in all discussions which relate to the well-being of the poor; that your own institutions are more immediately calculated for diffusing a spirit of labour among the poor; and that, in conformity to the purport of the text, I shall be led to speak of that labour only which is connected with honesty and temperance, and therefore is not only profitable but meritorious, not only conducive to true happiness, but auxiliary to true virtue.

Let us then, as I proposed, examine how far man seems to be intended for labour, and through labour for happiness, by the frame of his nature. In vegetable life there is a principle of growth and decay, and an adaptation of the organs to various purposes. The root strikes deep into the ground, the tree climbs aloft to the sky; and yet there is no capacity for change of place, and no appearance of voluntary effort even in the distribution of parts over the space which they are appointed to occupy. But living creatures are capable of motion, and to

move they are irresistibly impelled, that they may obtain whatever is necessary for the supply of animal wants. Thus by the economy of nature action begins at an early period, and by whatever causes it may afterwards be modified, whether it be guided by instinct as in brutes, or by observation as in man, in some degree or other it is requisite for the preservation of existence itself, and for the gratification of those desires which successively arise in the course of it, be they few or many, simple or complex. In regard to man, as he is not only endowed with a higher species of intelligence than other creatures, but with a freedom of choice, his sphere of exertion is more extensive. He wants indeed the strength of the ox and the fleetness of the horse, but shall this want be imputed to the parsimony of nature? No. It is a wise and gracious provision to call forth the various powers with which he is peculiarly invested; to put him upon bending the ox and the horse to his own purposes; to make him the artificer of his own happiness; to engage him in multiplied efforts, in diversified projects; and in improvement indefinitely progressive.

Go to the mathematician, and he will tell you, that as many quadrupeds are formed to draw, man is so made as to sustain, or to carry, in a degree almost incredible to those who are unacquainted with mechanic powers. By standing in his natural and erect posture he keeps the column of his whole body directly under the pressure; and what is evenly laid upon his shoulders, would by a transverse position crush the strongest horse. Again, by the

natural strength of his muscles, and the pliancy they gradually acquire from exercise, he can easily recover the centre of his gravity, and move forward with a load four or five times surpassing his own weight; such a load you will observe, as from the slightest change in that centre, must fall from any inanimate machine. By the same admirable contrivance for keeping the whole collective force of the bones directly under the burthen, two men can support a greater weight than, if it were divided, they could carry separately. Is not such a being then intended for labour? And if to these bodily powers you add what the moralist is concerned to investigate, I mean the variety of man's taste and talents, the ardour of his curiosity, the progress of his habits, and the desire of making his condition better; then his intellectual as well as his corporeal faculties will convince you, that an inactive is to him an unnatural state.

But further—brutes without any distinct views of ends, are led at once to the use of means, and as those ends are few the means are unvaried. Man, on the contrary, is capable of discerning the end; he not only employs means, but selects among them the more efficacious from the less; and in making that selection he is under the guidance of the reasoning faculty, which gains new force from every new experiment. His knowledge indeed, as preceded by ignorance, seems as we are told at first, only a capacity for observation. But it is a capacity which every hour rouses into action. Without inquiring whether reflection be the distinction of his nature,

man unavoidably reflects; and, reflecting, he forms those conceptions of things which mechanically recur to him when he proceeds to act. Here then observe the impartiality and beneficence of our Maker, which, however mortifying it may be to a narrow and a selfish pride, is most delightful to an honest and enlightened curiosity. If the laws of nature were wholly unknown to us in the relation of cause and effect, we could not argue from the past to the future; and reason, having no dependence upon its own precarious conclusions, nor any control upon external objects, would be less useful than instinct. But the general effects of gravitation and elasticity are observed in situations where science has never been cultivated. When the untutored savage has exchanged the cave for a clumsy hut, and the skin for a course web, still it is a hut which his own hands have erected, it is a web which his own skill has woven; and before he could do either, he must have known the hard or the soft texture, the capacity of receiving cohesion and stability in the matter which he has employed. But where the arts have made a considerable progress, it is yet more discernible that what we can achieve is increased by what we can discover. The powers of nature are more and more unfolded to us, as the materials she has placed within our reach are mouldered into new forms, and applied to new purposes. Instinct is stationary, but reason progressive. It innovates upon nature, it refines upon art. Under the direction of it, even the savage and the civilized artificer become more dexterous by accumu-

lated experience, and both individuals and generations leave some improvement of labour to their posterity, from whom again it descends to other individuals and other generations, for additional improvement in endless succession.

As the time will not permit me to lay before you all the observations that I have thrown together in support of these propositions, I shall content myself with stating to you the result of them. The desire of pleasure, the dread of pain, the paucity of our instincts, the intenseness and multiplicity of our inclinations, the gradual evolution of our intellectual powers, the gradual increase of our intellectual acquisitions, all conspire in shewing that man is made for action: and that happiness is to be obtained by himself for himself, by his own will and his own faculties, exercised for the supply of his own wants, and for the gratification of his own desires.

In confirmation of the arguments that prove this, I would mention one comfortable and important truth, that labour is often its own reward. Even in the lower orders of animals, we perceive that in some of them inaction is not necessary for their happiness. They will bound from their pasture, and even abandon their young, in pursuit not of sustenance only, but of recreation from the ardour of the chace. They will put forth their fullest strength with no other apparent view than the pleasure of putting it forth. They are insensible to toil and danger, and in these tumultuous moments they seem to seize a joy yet more exquisite than where the ordinary cravings of the appetite are to be satisfied.

Thus in man "every corporeal exertion not pushed to extreme fatigue, and every intellectual from which malignity and terror are excluded, have been classed by philosophers among our agreeable sentiments." The truth is, that all exercise may pass from an irksome to a pleasing state. Experience proves it to be useful; habit makes it easy; and ambition renders it delightful, in proportion as it may be arduous or rare.

Even they who neither toil nor spin cannot for ever remain at rest. They who are too proud to labour for hire, still are doomed to imitate the drudgery they affect to despise, in their hardy and voluntary amusements. Without the dread of shame or punishment, without the expectation of lucre or authority, they will display their strength and agility under a tacit conviction that labour is its own reward. But in employments of a more honourable kind, whether we engage in them from necessity, or convenience, or ambition, there is something congenial to the mind of man in the use of his powers—something pleasing to an honest pride, in the consciousness of possessing those powers—something interesting to our feelings, in the absence of those motives which, in common language, are distinguished by the name of interest.

To all these advantages of labour I will add a few others, which, though collateral, are not unimportant to us in our passage through life. Labour furnishes us with a fresh supply of strength and animal spirits—it diverts the sensual passions, and assuages the tempestuous—it catches by a sudden glance of

reflection the bright and animating image of conscious improvement—it relieves the dull and cheerless languor of indifference—it lightens the oppressive weariness of slothfulness long indulged—it scatters the sullen gloom of melancholy—it soothes the piercing pangs of sorrow—it dissipates the wild illusions of fanaticism—and, by a sort of magic force, it chases away those groupes of hideous spectres that hover around the dark and dreary abodes of superstition and despair. To many of the evils I have enumerated in this dismal catalogue, the unemployed, the uncivilized, and the unenlightened part of mankind are more peculiarly exposed; and therefore, if the institutions you patronize prevent or alleviate any one of such evils, great is the advantage to these children, and great, too, in heaven will be your reward.

Proceed we, in the second place, to shew the various profits derived from labour, and the mischiefs resulting from the want of it, in a state of society.

Hitherto we have considered man as an intelligent being, invested with certain powers for certain ends, and entrusted with his own happiness, dependent on his own exertions. But he is also a social being, who acts upon others, and who is himself acted upon by others—who has ideas of duty and right, and a part to undertake, which, as it should be well or ill sustained, will procure him esteem or blame, reward or punishment. Physically considered, man's personal efforts were intended to supply man's personal wants; and therefore, by a principle of self-preservation, his felicity is made to de-

pend on his own affections and his own actions rather than on any causes and effects extrinsic to himself, where the conditions of men are so unequal, and so little under the command of any individual. But in a moral point of view, he is so to control those affections and regulate those actions, that, in pursuing what is useful to himself, he may not do what is injurious to others; and while self-preservation branches out into a broader principle of self-love, and embraces the comforts and pleasures, as well as the necessaries of life, the conditions on which they are to be obtained produce new rules of action, and give new opportunities for acting, according to the relations in which we stand to our fellow-creatures.

Where, it may be asked, are the artificial wants supplied so amply as in society; or how, without society, could our artificial and adventitious desires be satisfied so exquisitely? Or rather, by what means could the desires themselves be generated, or what causes could be substituted for producing any enjoyments equal to those to which they are instrumental? Where is agriculture carried on with so much security, with so much ease, in such diversity of forms, or with such abundance of produce? Where could manufactures be wrought in such quantities, or for purposes so various and so useful? In the possible changes of the same materials, how could labour elsewhere acquire so much power, not only over those which nature has produced, but over those which art has changed from their primary form? The same original powers of action are exercised in the social and in the unsocial state. But

they are exercised with more regular and with more permanent effects. The same capacity of forming habits is visible; but with an infinitely greater diversity of modification. The same passion operates for meliorating our condition; but it operates through a wider compass, and with higher gratification. Hence our moral keeps pace with our intellectual improvement; hence, with the goodly fruits of labour, springs up a rich harvest of virtue—the love of order, a sense of justice, the admiration of excellence, the control of every turbulent passion, and the indulgence of every benevolent affection.

It appears then, that in society alone we can form an exact and complete calculation of man's capacity either as a rational or moral agent—either of his duty to labour, or of his happiness in the profit of labour: otherwise, the hand which now erects a palace would often be unable to rear a cottage; the head which investigates the laws of motion that pervade the whole planetary system, would scarcely be capable of tracing effects to causes in many ordinary productions of the earth; the heart which glows with friendship, with patriotism, and with expanded philanthrophy, would be cold and contracted. But against these evils provision is made by that Creator, who (as we have seen) not only has furnished us with powers to act in society, but planted in our inmost souls the most rooted love of it; and who by this adaptation of sympathy to intellect has increased the felicity of individuals, and secured the order, the union, and the general improvement,

both of the natural and moral constitution of things, as relating to man.

Now, as in nature the powers of men are unequal, so in society their conditions too are unequal. But instead of disputing about the causes of that inequality, let us admit the fact; let us remember that, in moral improvement, rather than political expedients, are to be found its best correctives, and let us consider the duties resulting from it, as they regard the proposition in my text, that in all labour there is profit.

Every one of you, I suppose, remembers the beautiful imagery in which St. Paul describes the Church of Christ by expressions borrowed from the component parts of the human body. And some of you, I apprehend, may without offence be informed, that nearly the same pertinent allusions are preserved in a charming fable of antiquity, and were employed by an antient Roman in quieting the fierce discontents, and confuting the clamorous complaints of an incensed populace. The eye, the hand, the feet, differ indeed in dignity; but each of them has its appropriate use, and each has a relation to the other. Neither of them can say to the other, "I have no need of thee;" and neither, refusing to exercise its own particular functions, can have a right to assistance from the functions of the other. The eye must guide, the hands must work, the feet must walk, and from their united efforts results the well-being of the whole body. Let us apply this reasoning to the orders of society. If the poor furnish labour, the rich must pay the reward of labour: if the poor man derive his profit from the

rich, the rich also derives his conveniences from the poor. And wide as may be the difference of their situations, neither the one nor the other can be so independent as to say, "I have no need of thee." Such, too, is the state of society, that all orders of it may be engaged in some employment, and that without employment their happiness will be diminished. The poor man, if he labours not, must shiver with cold, must pine with hunger, and, to relieve merely his animal wants, he must have recourse to practices which endanger his character, his liberty, and his very existence. The rich man, if he be slothful, will lose much of the gratification of his artificial desires. He will be satiated with luxury—he will be weighed down with weariness—he will shrink from reflection—he will forfeit his own esteem, and that of the world—he will be compelled to dissipate his time in frivolous amusements, which unnerve and debase the mind, or in licentious excesses, which are followed by the loss of fortune, the loss of reputation, and the loss of health. Unequal as may be the poor and the rich man in their exterior condition, they are bound by this just and equal law, that without labour they cannot be happy.

There is, I know, an extravagant philanthropy which makes us look upon all the poor as objects of pity; and there is also an inconsiderate subtlety, which too often checks our indignation against the opulent voluptuary, because he diffuses wealth around him. Providence, it must be granted, educes good from our follies and our crimes, but this eventual good is no justification of the foolish and the

wicked. The poor man, you say, though he be idle, may exercise our liberality; and the prodigal involuntarily brings into the hands of others that money which they earn and receive as the reward of their toil. Be it so. We do well to admire these dispensations of our Maker, in consequence of which some moral or some physical advantage arises incidentally even from the slothful. But Solomon very properly commands us, "When thou wilt do good, know to whom thou doest." And he as properly forbids us to say to the unrighteous, "ye are not wicked." By idleness, indeed, wheresoever it is indulged, men become not only useless, but injurious members of a community. He that receives good from others owes them some return; and as the idle make no return, their idleness is complicated with injustice and ingratitude. Consider—the rich man receives the whole from society, for it not only protects, but confers all he possesses; it not only endures, but respects his superiority, and strives to court his favour by assiduous services and brilliant distinctions. Justice, therefore, requires some exertions proportionate to his wealth; and, in fact, the most satisfactory advantage annexed to that wealth is, that he can be a supporter to the indigent, and a benefactor to his country. He may employ his revenue, his authority, and his counsel, in opening safe and commodious passages through the gloom of the impervious forest, the precipices of the rugged mountain, and the depths of the impetuous cataract. He may facilitate useful establishments for experiments; he may dedicate large por-

tions of his time to the acquisition of knowledge; he may institute or patronize seminaries for the instruction of the poor; and in all these instances his labour will be productive of profit to himself and his fellow-creatures. But if he abandons himself to sloth, and all the vices which sloth generates, he corrupts by his example, he permits and he teaches his immediate attendants to be, like himself, idle and profligate. He, by a profuse and ostentatious display of pageantry, plunges the competitors of his vanity in destructive expences; he provokes the mechanic and the rustic to make invidious comparisons between his easy and their own hard lot—between his luxurious superfluities and their scanty fare—between the splendour of the palace and the loathsomeness of the cottage. As they see only the dazzling surface of his situation, without suspecting that a worm is preying therein, the disproportion of supposed enjoyments makes them discontented in their humble station, spiritless in their daily labour, envious towards man, and impious towards God.

Such are the dangerous consequences of sloth in the higher orders of the community; and if we turn our attention towards the lower, we shall find our feelings shocked with spectacles of equal guilt and equal misery.

The poor man, if he return not toil for toil, and skill for skill, must prey for his very subsistence on the fruits of other men's talents and other men's exertions. He is therefore unjust. His idleness has been compared to a sort of atrophy which tends to make one

part of society pine away, while the other is sinking under the burthen of labour. He is therefore pernicious. From their numbers indeed, and from the temptations to which they are exposed, the poor seem to inflict the deepest wound on human happiness. The opulent sluggard, unless he be engaged in freaks of caprice where all despise him, or projects of oppression where all resist him, aims only at quiet. But the poor spread around them confusion and dismay. The rich are punished by contempt, and therefore lose that respect, which gives the highest relish to their enjoyments. But the poor have a shelter in misplaced compassion. If they appeal to that compassion with success, they reduce beggary to a system. On the contrary, if the real source of their sufferings be discovered in their sloth, and if their supplications be rejected with just and indignant reproof, they are often driven into combinations for mischievous rapacity. In silence and in solitude they brood over plots of fraud and violence. They quickly become insensible to the restraints of shame and fear; in the ordinary course of things they wage incessant war against the sacred rights of property; and in seasons of public danger they are always at hand to crowd round the banners of the seditious and the desperate.

Such are the dreadful effects of sloth amongst the ignorant and the indigent. All the natural powers with which God has invested them are perverted from their original purpose; and society, which was intended for a blessing to all its members, becomes a curse to them, by giving them a keener sense of

their comparative wretchedness, and by opening a wider door for their personal depravity. On the other hand, if they were laborious, they would be happy; and the sight of that happiness would remove many of those galling apprehensions, which seize upon the mind when our humanity is at variance with our piety, and we are tempted to arraign the appointments of our Maker, in subjecting his creatures to such diversity of condition.

The share we may have in external advantages is various; but it is sufficient for our happiness that the portion acquired by us preserves health, strength, and all the moderate gratifications of our desires. And when that portion is the fruit of well-meant and well-directed industry, it becomes "marrow to our bones, and is sweeter to us than honey or the honeycomb."

I now proceed, in the last place to apply the observations that have been suggested under the foregoing heads to the very useful and laudable purpose for which we are now assembled.

The utility of industry is well known to you by daily observation. And if I have succeeded in endeavouring to convince you, that by the original texture of the mind, and the gradual unfolding of the faculties, the Deity has made man dependant on his labour for his well being—if that labour be diffused through a greater extent, and rewarded with surer profit in the social state—if the inequality of conditions, instead of obstructing, serves to facilitate the exercise of that labour, and the attainment of that profit—you are in possession of paths most intimately

connected with the best designs of that seminary, which has been planted by your zeal, and cherished by your liberality.

Sloth among the poor is the foul but most abundant source of wretchedness and guilt. To conquer the stubbornness, and to counteract the fascinations of that sloth, you call them at an early period to such employments as may enable them hereafter to provide for their own comfort, to secure their innocence, and to make many valuable contributions to the welfare of the community. It should be remembered too, that without paying attention to their employments, you would endeavour to preserve their morals without effect; that idleness would leave them enslaved to every lewd appetite and every boisterous passion; that in manners they would be rugged; that in dispositions they would be brutal; and that in religion they would substitute the observance of outward ceremonies for the practice of substantial piety.

Graciously, however, is it ordained by Almighty God, that, while our views are more immediately directed towards the use of our bodily and mental faculties, we imperceptibly form opinions and gain habits of regularity, of temperance, of fortitude, and indeed of all the solid and meritorious duties we owe to ourselves, to our fellow creatures, and to our Maker. His best laws are obeyed, and his noblest purposes are forwarded, where honest labour is encouraged. By the husbandman in the field, by the manufacturer at his loom, and by the servant in the course of domestic offices, a sacrifice is offered, far

more pleasing in his sight, than by the lazy devotion of the recluse, or the frantic reveries of the enthusiast. Promoting in these young ones a spirit of industry, you close up the avenues of the heart against many temptations; you inspire them with a right sense of the character they have to support in the world; and you furnish them with the means of supporting it effectually and honourably. You qualify them for the different tasks they will hereafter be called upon to perform; and in those qualifications you reap for yourselves the fruit of their sobriety, their diligence, and their probity. You rescue them from the clamorous and corrupting conversations of thoughtless and shameless companions. You guard them from those humiliating wants and pernicious examples, to which they are exposed by the sloth or the profligacy of their parents. You give suppleness to their limbs, and cheerfulness to their tempers in the endurance of toils, to which levity or indolence might make them averse. You teach them to attach a sense of merit and utility to the tasks in which they may be now engaged, and to those for which they may be hereafter destined, you bid them lay out their talents, not in a wild and wasteful ostentation, but in pursuits which have a close relation to their own personal happiness, and the general prosperity of the community.

Such are your intentions in the labour that you appoint for them; and who among you that has either watched the conduct of these children in the course of their education, or traced it in the effects of their riper years, will harbour any latent doubts

on the usefulness of your institution, or start any fantastic cavils against the recommendation of industry as conducive to its most important ends? I have no reason to doubt but that the tasks which you allot them are well adapted to their situation, their capacity, and their age. But you will permit me to suggest some cautions, which I know to be of considerable moment; and the neglect of which I have often had occasion to lament on the employment of the poor. By close confinement, and by drudgery far too severe for the tenderness of their bodily frame, children under the command of imperious task-masters are condemned to suffer excessive pain, and so lay up stores of disease and weakness, which embitter their lives and hasten their dissolution. Too little attention, I fear, is usually given to the feeble structure of their organs, to the variety of their bodily constitutions, and to that wonderful economy, by which nature gradually and silently prepares the different paths of our frame for their different uses, in the different stages of infancy, boyhood, puberty, and manhood. Hence we often see the children of the poor with pallid countenances, with emaciated bodies, with tottering joints, with dejected spirits, and with all the alarming symptoms of premature old age, or of acute maladies, which suddenly strike them down to the grave. Impure air, scanty or putrid diet, postures of the body long continued, punctures of the flesh long neglected, excessive contraction or dilatation of the muscles, and excruciating distortions and luxations of the limbs occasioned by violent strains,

and attended by slow fevers that prey on the sufferers unobserved and unpitied—these are the causes by which the sons of industry silently and hourly perish, the victims of sordid avarice or obdurate tyranny. Thus not only is the thread of their life cut asunder at an early period, but they are incapacitated from discharging well their various duties, even while they drag on their forlorn existence. They fill up a scanty measure of the services which they might render to society. They toil without cheerfulness, and they receive even the recompence of toil without thankfulness. However industrious and however sober, they suffer misery more poignant and more lasting than that which falls to the lot of the sluggard and the debauchee. They pass their hours in unceasing solicitude, and perhaps they are tempted to wish for death as a refuge from toil and sorrow—from unremitted toil and unavailing sorrow, from comfortless days and sleepless nights, from the frowns of their rapacious employers, and from all the barbarous affronts, which helpless merit incurs from the unworthy and the unfeeling. But, surely, to make strength, as the wise man emphatically says, "the law of justice" towards fellow-creatures, by the sweat of whose brow you are enabled to deck yourselves in fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day, to bruise the broken reed, to wring the hearts of the young and the innocent with unabated and unmerited anguish, to scare with the uplifted lash, or with savage menaces, the labourer drooping and trembling under the pressure of his load, to extort from untutored, and it may be crip-

pled childhood, those services which the skill and robustness of maturer years cannot perform without difficulty; this surely is a degree of cruelty which must strike every benevolent observer with horror, and for which language itself cannot furnish any adequate terms of reprobation.

My hearers, I doubt not, are too well aware that this description is not less just than terrible, and they will excuse me for setting it before them, when I state that it is suggested by my own repeated and melancholy observation, and that I have often expressed the grief and indignation which the sight of such evils has excited in my own bosom to an eminent physician, whose family is well known to you, and whose name I could not pronounce without affection and reverence, because he is a most intelligent and active benefactor to the poor. His opinions coincide with my own, and upon the inhabitants of a populous and busy town it cannot be wholly improper to produce them.

In schools supported like yours by voluntary contribution, there is a circumstance which, however common to them, and well known to yourselves, is worthy of very marked notice and particular explanation. "To him," says a sacred writer, "who is occupied in evil, thou canst do no good." Charity, therefore, must be accompanied by judgment, and in the exercise of your charity you have opportunities for discriminating the talents and the characters of those whom you mean to benefit, and of withholding or continuing your favour, according to their merits or demerits. For this reason, your schools have a

striking and most important advantage over charitable foundations, which have been erected by the piety and the benevolence of well-meaning persons. In countries like Italy and Spain, where many hospitals have been built, poverty has been increased rather than diminished; and in the pursuit of unattainable good, the founders have done much eventual and almost irremediable harm. They have given the poor an interest in sloth, and in effect have instituted prizes for the most incorrigible sluggards. Hence have issued the swarms of loiterers and sturdy mendicants that infest the streets; and hence has arisen a void in the labour and wealth of the public stock. Evils have been guarded against that no longer exist, as in the case of the numerous Lazarettos that were established on the return of the Europeans from Asia, when leprosy was frequent. Good was designed, which no longer can be obtained, because new forms of society have grown up, and the poor, who for want of employment were formerly compelled to beg their bread at the stately gate of the noble, or the retired mansions of the religious, may now be more usefully employed in trade or agriculture.

Of these founders it were unjust not to acknowledge that they laid down rules well adapted to the manners of their own times, and have enforced the observance of them by the most awful sanctions. But in the course of a few revolving years, and amidst the unforeseen changes of customs and opinions, the gloss of novelty wears away. The original zeal, even of good men, is seen to cool in their

successors. Artifices of evasion are formed successfully—appearances are preserved while realities are neglected. Luxury, unseen and uncontrolled, pampers itself with the revenues that were destined for the relief of indigence. Even the anxious care taken by founders to prevent change in the distribution of their bequests, operates as an evil, by arraying improvement itself in the alarming forms of presumptuous innovation and ungrateful perversion.

A writer whom I have long classed among the most virtuous patriots and profoundest statesmen of his age, employed much care in the investigation and remedy of mischiefs from which your charity-schools, I suppose, are happily exempt. For a glow of generous enthusiasm, he expatiates upon the voluntary associations established in the British empire. He speaks with rapture of their beneficial effects among a rival people. He holds them up to the wonder and imitation of his own countrymen, and for their encouragement he points out the example of one town in France (Bayeux) where beggary had been suppressed by the well-directed measures of the inhabitants, who had associated to furnish employments for those who were capable of enduring it, and alms for those who were not.

The spirit of this great and good man rests, I would hope, in the mansions of the blessed. And though in common with all the friends of mankind I have sometimes lamented his death, yet the disasters which succeeded it have convinced me, that even here the dispensation of Providence was most

merciful. By that event, which the best and wisest of his countrymen have not yet ceased to mourn, he was himself delivered from all the pangs he must have felt, and all the tears he must have shed, at the calamitous scenes that are now passing. At the melancholy fate of a monarch whom, amidst the corruptions of a court and the cabals of competitors, he continued to serve with unshaken fidelity and undiminished affection—at the frightful convulsions of a beloved country, which he strove to rescue from the bonds of slavery and the spells of superstition—at the furious excesses of those misguided and headstrong multitudes whom he wished to train up in all the salutary employments and all the amiable virtues of social life. But though the remains of what was mortal in this man are laid low in the grave; the services he performed will be recorded in the faithful page of history. The fame of his projects has not been obscured by the base and crooked intrigues which supplanted them, and long will it survive the wreck of all the romantic perilous experiments by which those intrigues will in their turn be defeated.

His writings will attract the attention and command the admiration of the latest posterity; and, what is of yet greater moment, his example is at hand to guide the measures and to animate the zeal of every legislator and every governor who may profess to bow down at the name of Jesus. Pardon me, if, while pleading the cause of the poor, I have been eager to pay this tribute to the memory of a man, to whose feeling heart the in-

terests of the poor were most near—of a man who incessantly put forth the powers of a mighty and most enlightened understanding in schemes for the instruction, the reformation, and the employment of the poor—of a man who, amidst the glare of station and the din of politics, was most deeply impressed with the truth and importance of Solomon's declaration, that "in all labour there is profit."

From the incidental mention of this worthy personage, I am led to point out another circumstance very deserving of your attention. In the religious house of a neighbouring country, the lowest classes of the people met with relief; and whether it were owing to the importunity of suppliants, or to the difficulty of procuring intelligence about their characters, or to the stubborn regulations of founders, or to the mechanical influence of mere custom, they who asked for alms received them, with little or no discrimination. If hungry they were fed, if naked they were clothed. But they were not instructed (as the objects of your charity are) in any useful art. They were not trained up to the duties of society. They received a temporary, not a lasting benefit. Nay, they were fostered in idleness, rather than encouraged to industry. And of this misplaced succour what was the consequence? Mark it in the ingratitude of these miscreants towards their benefactors the clergy. Mark it in the contempt of every pious office which those benefactors performed; and in the disregard of every holy truth which they inculcated. Mark it in their caprice,

in their licentiousness—their unbridled, though not unprovoked ferocity; and in all those sanguinary excesses, which, having been inflicted, are retaliated, and deepen the horrors of war. These things are mentioned for your instruction. I would turn your thoughts to them, not for political but for moral purposes—not for the gratification of any national prejudices, but for the encouragement of your personal virtues—not to excite any one ungenerous triumph over the sufferings and the crimes of your neighbours, but to make you thankful to Almighty God, that the wiser direction of your own charity has a tendency to avert similar sufferings. and similar crimes from your own country.

Believe me then, my brethren, for your own sake, and for the sake of the poor. He that turning aside from the babble of sciolists, and the altercations of partizans, studies the force of moral causes on the heart of man, extensively in the records of history, or profoundly in the researches of philosophy, will be too well acquainted with the brighter side of things, "to fear where no fear is." He knows that the religious character of man is not to be separated from the social; nor the social from the intellectual. He knows, that to dread the progress of reason is a base insult upon his own rational nature; and that to resist it amounts to a high act of rebellion against the sovereignty of God, as our moral governor. He knows, that from a deluded, not an enlightened multitude—that from the sudden influx, not the gradual diffusion of knowledge—that from the jealous suppression, not the liberal en-

couragement of public improvement—errors and discontents and tumults are to be apprehended. He will look for good citizens in good men, and good men he will form by giving them possession of those truths "which," as a great writer says, "are the only source of public happiness, and to which the order of society should be conformed."*

In addressing the inhabitants of a larger, and, as I suspect, a more corrupt town than your own, I once took occasion to unfold the general principles of benevolence in such a manner, as to animate my hearers in particular exertions of it for charity-schools. But I am unwilling to repeat what I then advanced; and from the information I have received about the rise and progress of the institutions over which you preside, I believe that no such discussion is at this time, and at this place, necessary. You deserve to be praised for your general design. Upon some few particulars you may without impropriety be informed, or I should rather say, reminded of your duty; but you stand not in any need of elaborate arguments to convince, or of impassioned exhortations to persuade you, that charity holds an illustrious rank in the catalogue of christian perfections; and that the education of the poor and friendless forms a very important part of that eminent virtue.

Your school I understand has been flourishing for the space of eight years; and in eight years ex-

* Turgot.

perience must have proved to you the usefulness of your plans, while observation must have enabled you to supply defects, and to rectify errors in carrying them into execution. The objections which perhaps the seeming novelty of the experiment, rather than any criminal perverseness of temper, may have formerly suggested to some inhabitants, at length I am told, are entirely removed. Instead of being compelled to receive strangers into your families, you now meet with sober and honest domestics, who come to you not with the jealousy and coldness of eye-service, but with habitual sentiments of respect and confidence. Even in those who are not admitted into your houses you must have seen many favourable traces of diligence in their callings, and regularity in their morals. Surely I am not visionary in thinking that the example of the persons for whom you provide instruction, has not been without some kindly influence upon the disposition and behaviour of their comrades, who could not be comprehended in your plan. At all events I am justified in saying, that the parents of these children owe you most sincere thanks; and that if they have themselves been addicted to idleness or vice, they may find incentives to reformation in the better conduct of their offspring.

Some years ago I laid before the public my thoughts on the necessity of training up children in the fear and the love of the Lord. And though the length to which this discourse has already extended will not permit me to enlarge on the benefits of a religious education, I will take the

liberty of offering a few remarks upon a subject beyond all others most interesting to the wise and good.

I observe with great satisfaction that you insist on the regular attendance of the children at Divine worship. Permit me, however, to suggest to you, that in books intended for their private reading I should wish many distinctions to be made. Some pathetic parts of the Book of Genesis, all the Psalms of David, all the Proverbs of Solomon, select portions from the Prophets, and the whole of the four Gospels, should again and again be perused by these children. But in the Revelations of St. John, and the Epistles of St. Paul, there are many things too hard to be understood by unlearned, and especially by young readers. And as for the historical parts of the Old Testament, give me leave to say that they may be studied with less difficulty and more edification in some excellent and cheap books, which have been published by the celebrated Dr. Watts, in question and answer; and by the judicious Mrs. Trimmer, in continued and explanatory narrative.

Your own good sense will inform you how dangerous it must be to let in doubts and perplexities upon the first trains of our religious sentiments; and my habits of reading have long convinced me that many formidable evils will be prevented by the books which I have often recommended.

I should hope that, in the hearing of their parents and benefactors, these children sometimes repeat the catechism in the house of God. And though

it requires great judgment, and great delicacy, to explain a composition which, being professedly intended for youth, may seem to stand in need of no explanation; yet I am of opinion that some parts might with good effect be selected by a sensible clergyman, and in the course of their weekly tasks read by these little ones, from the Lectures of Archbishop Secker. Those lectures are plain, but without vulgarity; they are copious, but without prolixity; and they are solemn, but without fanatical jargon.

In your rules I see no directions for keeping the Sabbath, when the children have left church. And to say the truth, Sunday-schools are more particularly useful for such young persons as are destitute of instruction, and let loose from government in the course of the week. I really have doubts on the propriety of the very strict confinement, and very severe tasks, which are allotted to them upon a Sunday. I am no stranger to the grovelling prejudices and gloomy formalities of that age, when the Sabbath was in our own country converted from a day of rest into a day of mortification. I see nothing in the observance of that day by Christ, which warrants some later doctrines; and sorry I am that the season at which children are directed to look up to their gracious Father, should be saddened with unnecessary and unauthorized severities. In the practice of every virtue there is a nice and delicate medium to be observed, which zealots only overlook, and hypocrites only depreciate.

Upon one point I exhort my hearers to bestow

the most serious attention. Let religion, I entreat you, let religion, the most precious gift of a good God to his creatures, be presented to the minds of young persons in a pleasing and a lovely form. Let them be brought up to rejoice in the mercies, rather than shudder at the terrors, of the Lord. Let them not, in the days of their innocence, be annoyed with those fears, which are so necessary to rouse the guilty. Let not our chimerical assumptions, or lying divinations, make the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad. Let them not be permitted to view that God as a capricious master, whose favour is to be obtained by no regular and steady habits of diligence, sobriety, and honesty—as an inexorable judge, who is "extreme to mark what is done amiss," in all the little failings, and all the involuntary errors, of the creatures whom he has made—as a vain and haughty superior, who is to be propitiated by noisy importunity, by servile fear, by the bending of the knee, and the adulation of the lips—as a stern and arbitrary tyrant, who not only looks down upon the toils and the triumphs of active virtue without approbation, but even without concern lavishes his rewards on the pageantries and formalities of abject and superstitious homage. No! let them rather be told that his eyes are ever watchful over the poor and needy, and that his ears are open to their prayers—that his hand is stretched over them, to preserve them "from the arrow that flyeth by night, and the pestilence that walketh by noon day"—that his bounty has provided for their industry some

means of defence against the scorching heat and the pelting storm—that his spirit will pour sweet comfort into their souls, when languishing in sickness or wrung with affliction—that his works are laid open for their admiration, in the moon and the stars which he has spread over the vaulted firmament of heaven—and, above all, that his succour will not be wanting to them in the most trying and awful season, "in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment." These gracious truths they can understand, and understanding them they must feel. And of that teacher by whom these truths are seriously and frequently inculcated, splendid is the merit, and sure is the reward.

There is one more part of religious education which, for weighty reasons, I never fail to maintain, and to urge with unfeigned and uncommon earnestness. I mean, that the utmost care should be taken not to irritate the tempers, and bewilder the underderstandings of children upon obscure and controverted points of theology. True religion has no very intimate connection with the decision of such points; and from the mistakes of those who profess to teach what need not be taught, and to explain what cannot be explained, I often have seen, and I always forbode, the very worst consequences in young persons. They confound words with ideas, and assertions with proofs; they are led by degrees to dogmatize on what they cannot examine, to call in conceit to the aid of ignorance, and to mix the fury of zeal with the grossness of error. They view their Maker not as the great impartial judge of all

all his creatures, but as the capricious protector of some obscure and narrow sect. They see in their Redeemer not the author of a rational and comprehensive religion, but the teacher of dark and doubtful tenets, the knowledge of which is confined to what they rashly esteem his chosen Israel. If they adhere to these opinions, they are too prone to indulge themselves in presumptuous decisions, and uncharitable censures. But if, in the progress of life, they should once discover the fallacy of early prejudices, there is great danger to unlettered men in the notions which they afterwards adopt. Escape from error is not always a transition to truth. Where the tares are rooted up the wheat is not always sown. A coarse and impertinent scepticism rushes into the place of a blind and implicit faith. The understanding, thrown off from the only basis on which it had been accustomed to rest, totters in restless uncertainty, or seeks for refuge in a stubborn unbelief. The heart exchanges gloomy seriousness for profane levity. Religion, when it is no longer revered for its supposed mysteriousness, is hated for its supposed austerity; and after this dreadful revolution, all faith is subverted, all morality is corrupted, all piety is extinguished.

How, then, shall these evils be averted? I answer, by leaving the veil over mysterious subjects undrawn to the minds of children, by reasoning to them chiefly of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come:" by setting before them those truths which are intelligible to all capacities, and interesting to all ranks—truths which they may

hereafter review without disgust, and retain without difficulty—truths which familiarity will confirm, but not debase—truths which fanaticism cannot deface, which dogmatism cannot distort, and which sophistry cannot overthrow.

Into this train of reflection I have been led, not only by the general incapacity of children to reap any benefit from controversy, but by some untoward symptoms of bigotry and intolerance which I have lately discerned in those, who most arrogantly represent themselves as the only supporters of our Ecclesiastical Establishment, as the favoured depositaries of Christian knowledge, as the very best teachers of the very best truths. Against ignorance, professing, indeed, "to wield the sword of faith, and to have put on the breast-plate of salvation," but, in reality, entrenched only in obstinacy, and armed with uncharitableness,—against such an usurper, and such a foe, I should disdain to struggle, if I were not anxious to shelter these children from spiritual delusion and spiritual bondage. If, however, my opinion should have little weight with you, I trust that you will not lightly spurn the authority of Archbishop Tillotson, whose sentiments on this subject are exactly similar to my own; whose moderation was equalled only by his sagacity and his piety; and whose character many of you must have been accustomed to revere, as that of a steady friend to the laws and government of his country, and one of the brightest luminaries in that constellation of learned and virtuous prelates who have adorned the Established Church.

In closing this discourse, I shall address myself to those worthy persons who have undertaken the tender and most useful office of superintending the education of females. Never do the soft and lovely virtues of your sex appear with brighter lustre, than when you are thus engaged in instructing the ignorant, in consoling the friendless, in watching the blush that suffuses the cheek of ingenuous youth, and in wiping away the tear from the eyes of those that weep. Ye cast many a piteous and many a vigilant look on those female cares that escape the notice of our sterner sex; ye perceive the first dawnings of many excellences which eventually form a virtuous character, but, from their minuteness and exquisite delicacy, are unobserved by us;—ye can with peculiar grace descend to the detail of many courteous and affectionate offices, which in minds of a more robust form would appear hardly becoming;—ye, as Solomon expresses it, "blemish not your good deeds, nor use uncomfortable words when ye give." "Shall not the dew," say ye, "assuage the heat?" "is not a good word," in your estimation, "better than a gift? and are not both with a gracious woman?" Yes; and therefore men of reflection will know how to value the importance of your services; men of taste and sensibility will admire the spirit with which they are performed, and, for the sake of doing justice to them in description, they will have recourse to the apposite and luminous language of King Lemuel: "Ye," they will exclaim, "gird the loins of these children with strength, and strengthen their arms.

Ye perceive that their merchandize is good, and that their candle goeth not out by night. Ye bid them seek wool and flax, and work them willingly. Ye teach them to lay their hands to the spindle, to hold the distaff, to make fine linen, to deliver girdles to the merchant, to look well to their household, and not to eat the bread of idleness. Ye shew them that favour is deceitful, that beauty is vain, and that the woman who feareth the Lord shall alone be praised."

Go on, then, I beseech you, in this your labour of love; and may He who "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hath ordained strength," give effect to your pious and benevolent intentions. In this world, may you enjoy the profit of your well-meant toils, in the modesty, in the industry, in the becoming demeanour, and the heartfelt gratitude of those whom you patronize; and in the great Day when you, together with the other supporters of these charitable institutions, shall be summoned to your last and solemn account,—then, oh! then, may these little ones plead for you before the tribunal of the blessed Jesus, and accompany you, as you enter into the everlasting kingdom of their Father and your Father, of their God and your God.

SERMON XI.*

ON CONFIRMATION.

Acts viii. 17.

Then laid they their hands on them, amd they received the Holy Ghost.

That external signs facilitate and invigorate the impressions, which the qualities of the things signified are fitted to make by their own proper and intrinsic force, is known to us by the experience of every day. In conformity to this principle, which has its foundation in the nature of man, the Apostles, when they had baptised their converts, and prayed for them, laid their hands on them. In the Epistle, too, of the Hebrews, vi. 2. the doctrine of baptism and laying on of hands is joined with the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment, and from the facts just now mentioned to you we see the close connection of this ceremony with the religious opinions of the very earliest believers. After the apostolic age it was extended from baptism to confirmation, and in both cases it points out to us the spiritual condition of

* June 1815.

persons, who were expected to make farther progress in the knowledge of Christian truth and the exercise of Christian virtues.

Here, then, in order to preserve you from erroneous conceptions and superstitious credulity, I must exhort you to distinguish, what are too often confounded, a sign and a cause. When the Apostles put hands on their converts, it was not the cause of their receiving, but a sign that they would receive the Holy Spirit; and that Spirit was given by God, but not even conveyed by the Apostles. When I dip my hands in consecrated water, and sign an infant with the sign of the cross, it is a token that he ought, and by his sponsors has engaged, to fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, and the world, but not an efficient cause; for that is to be found in good precepts and good examples from other men, and in his own good principles. When the Bishop confirms, he does not give the spirit of counsel, and ghostly strength, but prays that it may be given; and he employs the exterior rite practised by the Apostles at the time when the aids of the Spirit were vouchsafed to his followers.

In our own times, when the hands of the ecclesiastical superior are thus laid upon catechumens, we are not authorised to look for those supernatural effusions of the Holy Spirit, which, upon the first promulgation of the Gospel, were granted to the Apostles and their immediate followers. But when the frame of the mind is adapted to those ends, for which the outward observances were instituted, the sign is laudably retained for the purpose of remind-

ing us that the assistance of God will in due time and in due measure be given to those, who are sincerely inclined to carry into practice such holy desires and such holy intentions, as the Deity may suggest to them by the agency of various causes. The operation of these causes is equivalent to what is commonly understood by the word "grace."

And here it becomes me to remind you, that this word, in the original language of the New Testament, implies, in some passages, "our acceptance with God or man"—in others, "any kindness granted or desired"—in others, "the free and unmerited goodness of God by our redemption through Christ"—in others, "contributions for the relief of our fellow-creatures"—in others, "thankfulness or recompence for benefits secured"—in others, "courteousness,"—but in none, directly or indirectly, "the influence of the Holy Spirit, ordinary or extraordinary." And yet for this peculiar and exalted sense, which you continually hear assigned to the English term in pulpits, there was frequent occasion, if it had pleased the sacred writers to employ it in Greek. But they have not. Mark, however, that all the actual and all the conceivable means of moral improvement fall under the general sense of "favour," so far as favour cometh from God, and as such is deserving of serious attention and grateful acknowledgment. Reason is a favour—the sense of right and wrong, by which, as well as by reason, man is distinguished from the lower animals, is a favour—the advantages of education in giving a livelier perception and a surer direction to that

sense, is a favour — the progress of civilization, which softens our rougher passions, and purifies our coarser enjoyments, is a favour—the establishment of a reformed religion in this country is a favour. This enlarged view of the subject shews to us our obligation to God, and illustrates also our dependence upon him without the gloom of superstition, or the visions of fanaticism. But I must carry you one step farther and higher: for whatsoever is intelligible or credible in the fact that there is a salutary influence of the Deity upon our minds, has been clearly stated in Scripture, not indeed by the popular word *grace*, but by the positive declaration that it is God who "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," and in reality he thus worketh in us by the agency of various causes, which owe to him alone their efficacy, and even existence.

Here, again, revelation, when properly understood, is not at variance with philosophy: for on the grounds of natural religion, the moral, as well as the physical government of things is administered by the same Being, and therefore a distinguished champion in the cause of infidelity states explicitly, "that God is the efficient cause of faith, and that all the good opinions which we admit," and, I add, all the good actions which we perform, "though they proceed from hearing, and hearing from teaching, both of which are strictly natural, yet are in reality the work of God."* In the following discourse, then, I shall bring back to your

* Hobbes on Human Nature, Mallet's edit. p. 88.

memory a part of the instruction which I lately gave to you on the subject of confirmation, where imposition of hands is employed; and upon other points, relating to the same subject, I shall bring forward such explanations and such remarks as seem to me worthy of your serious notice.

Of the respect that I feel, and wish you to feel, for the Church to which we belong, you have numerous and decisive proofs in the discourses delivered by me from this pulpit. At the same time you must have remarked my anxiety to preserve you from misconceptions and antipathies, which are so often and so fatally encouraged towards religious societies, the peculiar doctrines and discipline of which differ from our own. The consequence of such popular and inflammatory harangues is the substitution of a spurious or unprofitable faith for genuine and substantial charity. In fact, teachers may now and then understand, very superficially, what they inculcate very dogmatically; and there is too much reason for sagacious and impartial observers to suspect, that such zeal upon such topics in many cases takes its rise from scanty knowledge, from constitutional asperity, from habitual arrogance, and sometimes, I fear, from crafty hypocrisy or venal servility. The ignorance, credulity, and impetuosity of hearers, render them instruments for the fierce passions, or the worldly views of their instructors, and, while sophistry or invective is employed in the defence of doubtful tenets, candour, brotherly love, and all the weightier matters of the law, are made of no effect by the unauthorised tra-

ditions of fallible, and, it may be, corrupt men. Possible, nay probable, it is, that with all my own caution, and all my solicitude, I may myself be sometimes mistaken. But when, in support of the opinions maintained by our excellent Church, I find occasion to point out what I think the errors of other Christian communities, I have taken, and ever will take care, not to marr any scriptural truths by enforcing them in a spirit that the Scripture does not warrant, and I ever have given, and will give, credit to the members of the Greek Church, the Church of Rome, and Protestant Dissenters, for the sincerity of their professions, the rectitude of their intentions, and the greater or less validity of their arguments.

You may recollect, that this day fortnight I preached to you upon confirmation, in order to prepare you for the approaching performance of that rite in our diocese. I then laid before you the statements, and even the words, of Mr. L'Estrange, a very celebrated writer, and I added to them other pertinent matter which my own researches in ecclesiastical history suggested to me. I told you, that between the Church of England and the Church of Rome there was much controversy upon applying the word "sacrament" to confirmation, and while I declared to you my own assent to the tenets and language of our Church, I did not fail to remark that, upon this, as well as other theological subjects, the dispute to a considerable extent is verbal, and not very important. We say, and, according to my judgment, we say well, that, in order to constitute a

sacrament, there must be what are technicaliy called "verbum et elementum," a scriptural injunction and a visible element. Now for baptism there is such injunction, "Go ye," says our Lord, "and baptise in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" and there is also such an element, water—the use of which varies. For in some eastern countries the water is warm, and mingled with sweet herbs—in others, there is a plunging of the whole body—in others, there was a dipping of the whole face, and it was noted by Erasmus as a singularity among the English, that such immersion was used by them. In others, aspersion, or sprinkling, was the custom, and no doubt, from the tenderness of children, this sprinkling, which we now employ, is most proper. Under any of these forms, however, we have an element.

So again in the celebration of the Sacrament we have an injunction. "Do this," says our Lord at the Last Supper, "in remembrance of me." And we have elements too, bread and wine, nor is it of any consequence what are materials of the bread, nor in what particular form it is made and broken—nor whether the wine be drunk pure, or, as it was in some early ages of the Christian Church, with a mixture of water—nor whether we receive the elements in a kneeling posture, as for more than twelve hundred years has been the custom of the Western Church—nor whether the communicant stands upright, and then, upon taking the cup or bread, reverentially bows down, as was formerly the practice in the East.

Thus far all is clear in the conformity of these two ceremonies as practised by ourselves, to the definition of a sacrament as laid down by ourselves; and plain it is that confirmation is not attended by two properties, which that definition includes—there is no outward element—there is no scriptural command; and even the more enlightened of the Romanists acknowledge that their primary authority is unwritten tradition. But, as they define the word "sacrament" with much more latitude than we do, Confirmation may by them very intelligibly and very consistently be considered as a sacrament, and the whole difference between them and ourselves will turn merely upon one word.

We both assert that it is a rite of very great antiquity, and of considerable use—we both of us hold that it is a becoming preparative for the Lord's Supper. They indeed affirm, and we deny, that it is to be called a "sacrament," and yet I think it for the credit both of the good sense and the fairness, which I have seen in the Church of Rome, that while the members of it contend for seven sacraments—Baptism, the Supper of the Lord, Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Marriage, Ordination, they do not represent these ceremonies as of equal importance, but judiciously and piously distinguish the Lord's Supper by the exclusive and reverential appellation of the "holy sacrament." On the other hand I have often taken occasion to commend the wisdom and moderation of the Church of England. For in a catechism, which is admirably fitted for the edification of the young when they

learn, and of the old when they study it, our venerable forefathers, instead of peremptorily and contumeliously rejecting five of the rites called by the Romanists sacramental, preserve a wary and candid silence about them, and are content with saying that "Christ hath ordained for his church only two sacraments, as generally necessary for salvation—that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord." Knowing then, and lamenting too, the untoward prepossessions, and the angry reproaches, in which Protestants too often indulge, and by unlearned and intolerant preachers are encouraged to indulge towards their fellow Christians in the Church of Rome, I frequently insist upon the circumstance just now mentioned. Hence I hold it out to you as a striking fact and a salutary example; and in other places I employ it for the purpose of softening the violent, restraining the conceited, and confuting the superficial. But farther, I gave you to understand that the word sacrament was in the Christian world applied with much greater diversity than it now is by ourselves. We confine it to "the outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace given unto us, which sign was ordained by Christ himself as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

Now I shall not, in addressing such an assembly as this, produce many passages from the Latin fathers, who by the word sacrament sometimes mean "a particular doctrine"—sometimes a "particular rite"—sometimes the whole Christian religion as contained in the gospel"—and sometimes

"the whole system of discipline and worship established in the Church of Christ." But, in order to guard you against the rash and uncharitable language of too many Protestant teachers, it may be of use to shew you, my brethren, how much more judgment, and how much more fairness are to be found in those excellent men, to whose well weighed counsels and well directed exertions we ought to look up with respect and gratitude, for the constitution of that church, to which we ourselves by the good providence of God belong.

The whispers with which I have long been annoyed in some places, and the clamours by which I have been assailed in others, compel me to speak unreservedly. Theological questions of considerable magnitude are to be settled, my brethren, not by loquacious parish-clerks, or pragmatical churchwardens, none of whom are to be found in this retired and decent village—not by unlearned country gentlemen, or half learned country priests—not by blusterers, who are indebted for their orthodoxy to intemperance when they are drunk, and to prejudice when they are sober—not by slanderers, who measure their imaginary attachment to the national church by their causeless hatred of Dissenters and Romanists—but by a grave appeal to the works of men, justly and generally celebrated for the clearness of their intellect, the depth of their learning, the diligence of their studies, the uprightness of their principles, and the exemplary regularity of their lives. Such an appeal I am now going to make on the diversity of sentiment between our church and that of Rome, about Confirmation.

The language of the homilies then is quite decisive upon the latitude, in which even by the confession of our forefathers the word "sacrament" was sometimes used in the Christian church. "Absolution," say they, in their excellent homily on common prayer and sacraments, "is no more *such* sacrament as baptism and the communion are. And though the ordering of ministers hath this visible sign and promise, yet it lacks the promise of remission of sin, as all other sacraments besides the two above named do. Therefore neither it, nor any other sacrament else, be such sacraments as baptism and the communion are. But in a general acceptation the name of a sacrament may be attributed to *any* thing, whereby an holy thing is signified. In which understanding of the word the antient writers have given this name, not only to the other five, commonly of late years taken and used for supplying the number of the sacraments; but also to divers and sundry other ceremonies, as to *oil*, washing of feet, and such like, not meaning thereby to repute them as sacraments in the *same* signification that the two forenamed sacraments are."

Now it is plain, that in the view of our venerable prelates, a difference exists between the larger and the more restrained import of the same word. That absolution, though not such a sacrament as baptism and the communion, may be a sacrament—that ordination and other sacraments, though not such sacraments as those two, may be in their own kind sacraments—that in a general acceptation the name of a sacrament may be attributed to any thing,

whereby a holy thing is signified—that according to this understanding of the word, the ancient writers in point of fact *have* given the name not only to the seven sacraments of the Church of Rome, but sundry other ceremonies, though not reputing them as sacraments in the same signification that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are considered—that no man ought to take certain other rites and institutions of our church, they do not add, for sacraments *at all*, but for *such* sacraments. And when it is said that these ancient writers did not affix to all those ceremonies the same meaning which they did to baptism and the supper of the Lord as sacraments, it must be remembered, that the teachers of the Church of Rome would with equal propriety and equal sincerity allege, that they also do not indiscriminately place the five other sacraments upon a footing of entire equality with these two. As to what is called afterwards in our homilies the exact meaning of the word, it is settled arbitrarily, and I think innocently, by every religious community. For in theology, as in other sciences, when a definition is once given, he, that speaks or writes consistently with it, is exact.

If it were generally agreed by a larger or a smaller society that "penance" should be considered as a sacrament, he that spoke of it with reference to that agreement, would be exact. If it were agreed by other societies that penance should not be called a sacrament, he, that in reference to those societies did call it so, would not be exact; and thus relatively to the tenets of the English Church, the appellation

of sacrament cannot with exactness be given to penance. In assigning names to objects, the chief and nearly the sole requisite is, that in the thing signified, there should not be any known inherent properties utterly irreconcileable to the component parts, and to the primary or the modified power of the sign; and surely in the word sacrament, as a sign, there is no such irreconcileableness to any religious observance, either explicitly enjoined by the revealed word of God, or by fair deduction not incompatible with the letter or the spirit of it. In all churches therefore, there is an equal right to determine for themselves, though not for other Christian communities, what ritual observances shall, or shall not be denominated sacraments. On this, as indeed on every other question of arbitrary institution, more or less respect is due to the testimony of antiquity, and to the exigencies of custom; and surely wheresoever religion is concerned, wise and good men will reluctantly attempt innovations—unnecessary, when they rectify no material errors—unbecoming, when they alarm weak though well disposed minds—and unsafe, when they stir up virulent contentions.

In the political sense of the word "sacrament," a Roman might eminently apply it to the military oath of fidelity taken by a soldier to his general.* In the religious sense of the same word, a

* In the civil sense of the word, sacrament was applied to the deposits which were made by plaintiff and defendant in a litigated cause, and put into the hands of the pontifex, or some sacred place, and after the determination of that cause the por-

Christian church may eminently apply the word to the Lord's Supper, by the celebration of which a communicant not only commemorates the sufferings of his Saviour, but gives an open pledge of his attachment to the cause of Christianity. But let every captious objector, and every impetuous polemic remember that sacrament itself is not a scriptural term, though the ceremony denoted by it is expressly enjoined in scripture; and as the obligations to that ceremony are so direct, and the uses of it so numerous, prudence or decorum seems to require that the reverence, which we feel for it, and which is excited within us by the mention of the term, should not be exposed to any diminution—exposed however it would be, if the term were extended to many other inferior subjects, and thus made too familiar to our ears and to our imaginations by frequency of recurrence, and perhaps ambiguity of application. The inconvenience is indeed twofold. For by the known laws of association, while the intrinsic and appropriate dignity of the greater ceremony imperceptibly exalted the less to an undue degree, the comparative want of dignity in the less might gradually weaken the effect of the greater; and of this consequence the

tion paid by the vanquished party was either employed to supply the wants of the public treasury, or applied to the uses of the national religion. The forms too, in which this judicial deposit was made, have been handed down to us, and are these, S. N. S. Q., si negas sacramentum quærito; or S. N. E. T. Q. S. P., si negas ego te sacramento quingenario provoco. In the Theodotian Code the word is applied even to Jewish ceremonies—Judæis sacramentis Christianum servum attaminare.

Church of Rome was in all probability aware, when in order to secure the pre-eminence of the Lord's Supper over six other sacramental rites, it affixed, as I told you, the epithet "holy" to the word sacrament, as peculiarly characteristic of this important rite.

The result of these observations on the homilies of the Church of England, and some verbal contests, which many learned members of it have carried on with the Church of Rome, is this—while we are without disturbance allowed to express our own belief in our own phraseology, we ought not to feel angrily, or to talk acrimoniously against other Christian communities, when with similar firmness they assert a similar claim in the choice of their phraseology for the expression of their belief. We ought not to charge impious superstition, or even rash innovation upon the Church of Rome for applying the word to seven ceremonies, when the antient writers set them a precedent by using the same word of sundry other ceremonies, apparently not more presented to us expressly in the gospel, nor more beneficial to Christians, than five of the rites, which the English Church does not choose to admit in the catalogue of her sacraments.

The institution of Ministers in the Church, Matrimony, Confirmation, are useful rites in religion. No man among us, as say the homilies, takes them for sacraments in such signification as the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are. Every considerate and serious man among us believes them, as they are represented in the Homilies, to be

"godly states of life, necessary in Christ's Church, and therefore worthy to be set forth by publick action and solemnity, by the ministry of the Church, or else judges to be such ordinances, as may make for the instruction, comfort, and edification of Christ's Church." Let us descend into some detail. Surely, my brethren, when persons are ordained to any holy function—when we pray God to give them his heavenly benediction, that both by their life and doctrine they may shew forth his glory, and set forward the salvation of all men—and when Bishops are instructed to lay hands suddenly on no man, but faithfully and wisely to make choice of fit persons for the sacred ministry, ordination is no trifling ceremony. Surely when in the Matrimonial Service we assign the weighty reasons, for which marriage is to be taken in hand, reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God—when the parties plight their troth, for loving and cherishing each other till death do separate—when the minister pronounces them to be man and wife together in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and entreats the Lord to bless them, to sanctify them, to pour upon them the riches of his grace, that they may live together in holy love to their live's end, and in the world to come have life everlasting—such a ceremony, whether you do or do not call it a sacrament, is most momentous. Surely though the same severities are not among us employed upon penitents, as in the Church of Rome, our Bishops did not mean to trifle or prevaricate, when they wished for the restoration of the godly discipline, by which persons convicted

of notorious sin were put to open penance, and punished in this world that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord; and surely too the awful and wholesome instructions given to sinners in the service of Commination, are no unintelligible or inconsiderable part of our own Protestant religion, though we call not penance a sacrament. Thus much I have to say upon three of the disputed points. As to the fourth, called Extreme Unction, no doubt it is dropped entirely among ourselves, not only at confirmation, but upon other occasions; and yet our best writers acknowledge that the ceremony of Chrism is mentioned in very antient canons—that many centuries ago it was employed in the Greeks as well as the Latin Church—that it contained an allusion to the oil, unto which the Holy Spirit is compared for its healing and flaming qualities,* and that the reasons of our laying it aside were the want of evidence for the observance of it in the apostolical age, and the improper purposes to which it was applied by the Church of Rome. But improper interpretation or application alone would of themselves no more exclude Chrism than they exclude the Lord's Supper, in consequence of what is said about the real presence, and the actual sacrifice which accompany it, according to the tenets of the Roman Church, from the claim to be considered as a sacrament; and though I should not myself call it by that name, yet the introduction of that name into Christian worship was not altogether an innovation in that

* See Comber.

Church, and therefore the blame should fall not indiscriminately on the use, but solely on the abuse of the rite itself. As to the fifth controverted article, Confirmation, though I would not imitate the Church of Rome in ranking it among the sacraments, yet I see no ground for harshness of censure towards those, who, agreeing with us upon the great usefulness of the rite, assign to it a more honourable name. Instead of wrangling about the word both parties would be better employed in attending to the thing.

For your information I shall now proceed to state a few other particulars connected with the rite, which I am now explaining to you. Many centuries ago it was performed every year in every diocese, and the time was first Lent, and afterwards Easter, or Whitsunday; and the choice of these seasons evidently arose from their marked solemnity. According to the present custom of the English Church, Bishops confirm every third year, and the month or day is selected according to their discretion, which doubtless is very much influenced by the number and the distance of the parishes, over which they preside. Imposition of hands, as I told you, is continued according to the example of antiquity, and this circumstance I had in view when I selected my text. Formerly there was another process, which, for reasons unknown to me, has now ceased. For Bishops then not only laid their hands on catechumens, but signed them with the sign of the cross, in the same manner as all clergymen are now required to do in the office of baptism. No

imputed superstition could, I think, have produced the change. For upon that ground the ceremony ought to be omitted also when children are brought to the font. But, as persons had been already signed with the cross, in token that hereafter they should not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, the resumption of that ceremony may have appeared superfluous, and the performance of a distinct ceremony for catechumens, in the laying on of hands, may have been thought sufficient.

It will not be amiss for me to state another alteration which has been made in our own church. I have further to tell you, that Chrism, or anointing, which certainly was practised by the earlier Christians, and which, in confirmation, and upon other occasions, is now continued in the Church of Rome, has been abolished among ourselves. But, when the practice itself had ceased, figurative allusions to it were made by the founders of the English Church, from a conviction, no doubt, that the imaginations of men had been strongly impressed by the ceremony of unction. Hence, in the first Prayer-book of Edward the Sixth, we meet with a very striking passage, which now cannot be found in the rubric, and in which there is, in metaphorical terms, a direct reference to the previous use of the Chrism. The words are these: "Sign them, O Lord, and make them to be thine for ever by the virtue of thy holy cross and passion — confirm and strengthen them with the inward *unction* of the Holy Ghost, and mercifully bring them unto everlasting life." Instead of this prayer, the Bishop now says:

"Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily increase in them thy manifold gifts of grace, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and fill them, O Lord, with the spirit of thy holy fear now and for ever." Gladly, as a teacher of the Established Church, I can in this instance set before you an alteration, which seems to me a real improvement.

Again: I told you that there was a difference of regulation about the age, at which persons are to be confirmed. There was a custom among the Jews, that, when the children had learned the law and the "mischna," and were thirteen years old, they should be declared "sons of the precept," and were to answer for their own sins.* The opinions and practice of the Christian world have varied. About five hundred years ago, children in England were confirmed at five years old. But before the Reformation it was ordained, in the Latin Church especially, that "children should not be admitted to be confirmed till they be of fuller age, that so opportunity may be given to the parents and godfathers, and to the Rectors of the Church, to instruct and admonish them more diligently in the faith, which they have professed in baptism."* This principle is clear and judicious, and therefore our Church very properly differs from the Council of Trent, which appoints confirmation for children between seven and twelve, and the

* See Comber.

Synod of Milan, which forbids it to any under seven. The Canon Law fixed no express term, but requires generally that they be of perfect age, and the Gloss interprets that to be twelve, because it was supposed that they were then of competent age to understand confirmation, and to profit by it. The English Church, with great prudence, reserves confirmation, in general terms, for years of discretion; and I have great satisfaction in producing before you the very words which the Church employs. "The Church hath thought good to order, that none hereafter shall be confirmed, but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and can also answer to such other questions, as in the catechism are contained: which order is very convenient to be observed; to the end that children being now come to the years of discretion, and having learned what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them in baptism, they may themselves, with their own mouth, and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the same; and also promise that, by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as they, by their own confession, have assented unto."

Now it is merely by custom that the Bishops of our Church have fixed upon the fourteenth year, presuming that, with the aid of teachers and by the commands of parents, children are then able not only to repeat, but to understand the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, to comprehend the solemn promise made in their

names at their baptism, to have an awful sense of their responsibility to God for their subsequent conduct, and to see the necessity of virtuous habits, and of a religious disposition, for preparing them to partake, at no very distant period, in the banquet of that most heavenly food which is provided for them, when they commemorate the meritorious death and passion of their blessed Redeemer.

To conclude—It behoves me, at this season more especially, earnestly to call upon all parents and masters of families, that they should send their children and their servants to the approaching confirmation, and, according to the best of their power should impress upon the minds of these persons the nature and ends of the duty, which they are soon to perform. To the younger part of my audience I have to offer that plain and solemn advice, which they cannot fail to understand, and which it well becomes them to reflect upon and to follow. Let them, before they appear in the presence of the Bishop, read the Catechism within their own houses —let them meditate again and again upon the articles of their Creed, and upon the contents of that holy prayer, which Christ himself has most graciously taught for their benefit—again and again let them contemplate all the interesting and salutary truths, which are set before them in the explanation, which our Catechism gives them of the duty, which they owe to their neighbour and their God.

Most anxiously do I conjure every parent, and every young person now present, to listen to me, while I set before you the energetic and impressive

language of the Greek Church in the office of confirmation. "The bonds," says the Bishop, "are now sealed, and Christ, who is in Heaven, hath received them—mind your promise, and fulfil your engagements, which will be openly produced at the last day—take heed that you blush not at Christ's awful tribunal, when all the powers of Heaven tremble, when all mankind stands to be judged, and when your spiritual adversary will be present to accuse you, saying—Lord, this wretch in word renounced me, but in deed was my servant. The angels shall sigh, and holy men shall bewail your wretchedness. But father and mother cannot help you—brethren and friends will not own you—every sinner will be left destitute. Consider therefore while it is in your power, and provide for your safety."* May these awful warnings be written as with a diamond upon the heart of every man who hath ears to hear. To you, my younger brethren in Christ, they are most important, and you will remember that in the Greek Church the words, just now recited to you, were uttered by the Bishop when catechumens, having in substance been called upon to answer, as you will, whether, in the presence of God and of the congregation, they would renew the solemn promise made at their baptism, they answered, as you also must, in this short and simple but most significant form of words—"I do."

As to the parents who are now before me—I do most sincerely conjure you to teach the truths con-

* See Comber, p. 624.

tained in those warnings most diligently to your children, that they may talk of them when they sit down in your houses—talk of them when they walk by the way—talk of them when they lie down and when they rise up—bind them as a sign upon their hands, and a frontlet between their eyes, and thus be instructed to remember their Creator in the days of youth, of manhood, of old age, and be prepared for their great, final, and solemn account after the the hour of death, and at the day of judgment.

To that account, my hearers, in which my own salvation is so deeply interested, I may myself be summoned before I have any other opportunity to prepare the persons committed to my charge, for ratifying and confirming with their own tongues the vow made in their names when they were baptized; and, therefore, with a deep sense of a duty which perhaps I am now performing for the last time on this side of eternity, I with more than usual propriety, and more than usual earnestness, address myself to you, who are the younger part of my audience. Let, therefore, young men remember the innumerable perils, to which they are exposed from their time of life. They have to contend with many latent imperfections in their own tempers, such as pride, envy, wrath,—and these are evils which, if they do not strive to check them, will disturb their future peace, plunge them into many criminal actions, and bring upon them the just hatred of their fellow-creatures, and the terrible displeasure of their Maker. They have to watch against the fascinating allurements of pleasure, which, from

the mere circumstance of novelty, is the more attractive to their inexperienced minds, and into which they may be precipitated, perhaps beyond the power of recovery, by the impulse of their unruly lusts. They have to resist the wily persuasions and seductive example of inveterate and incorrigible sinners, who malignantly triumph in the number of converts which they make to the cause of vice.

In my judgment, and, let me add, according to my practice, harsh measures and bitter reproaches of parents and of families are not the most becoming or most efficacious correctives for those occasional errors and failings into which youth, with all the advantages of good culture from education upon a good soil from nature, is sometimes betrayed. Parents and masters of families should, indeed, calmly and seriously discourage those failings, while the sense of shame, which at first attends vices, is not blunted, and before they have so far prevailed over discretion, modesty, and fear, as to have gained dominion over the whole mind,—while the danger is, in appearance, at some distance. Under all circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, their interposition will be more or less required, in suggesting well-timed caution or supplying well-tempered reproach.

Unaccustomed to calculate the remoter consequences of single actions, and to explore the silent operations of their own appetites, young men stand in need of being reminded, as I now most solicitously remind you, that habitual idleness, habitual profaneness, habitual intemperance, habitual lewdness, not

only are offensive in the sight of God, but lead to poverty, to disgrace, to loss of health,—that, under the pressure of want produced by laziness, or extravagance, or debauchery, you may be ultimately hurried into overt acts of theft, plunder, and even murder,—and that, after this dreadful exchange of your present innocence for your future depravity, you may be torn from the lovely sight of all the scenes most dear to you in the playfulness and simplicity of your childhood, dragged from the homes in which you were fostered by the care, cheered by the caresses of your affectionate parents, immured in gloomy prisons, laden with heavy chains, and, finally, destroyed by a painful and ignominious death. Is there in this sanctuary one father who, in the tender yearnings of his soul hath implored a blessing from Heaven upon his offspring, when gently reclined upon his knee, and looking up to him for an affectionate smile—one mother, from whose breasts hath hung the helpless infant—one sister, or brother, who at the same table have eaten their daily sustenance, and under the same roof have enjoyed the refreshment of sleep—is there one giver or one partaker of these precious and hallowed endearments in domestic life, whose bosom would not be chilled with horror if these calamities and these crimes were supposed to await those with whom they now familiarly associate, and whom they sincerely love? Can there be one youth, who does not lift up the eye of supplication to heaven, and join with me, his instructor, in my unfeigned and fervent prayer, that such sins may not be committed by himself in

this world, nor the punishment of such sins overtake him in the world to come?

In the name of God, therefore, and in Christ's behalf, I conjure you, my hearers, to take heed unto yourselves. My heart would be wrung with anguish—my eyes would overflow with tears—my whole frame would shudder, if, looking around me, I were to see any young person, upon whom I should have reason to believe that these tremendous evils would fall, as they advance in years, and so fall that penury, that infamy, that disease, and premature death, should be their lot here, and that hereafter they should be excluded from the presence of virtuous parents, virtuous brethren, virtuous friends, virtuous neighbours, exalted unto Heaven, and condemned to suffer with wicked companions the tremendous torments of hell. Preserve, O my God! those, who now hear me, from such guilt and such woe. On the other hand, if, according to the lessons you can all of you learn from the Catechism, you love your neighbour as yourselves, honour and succour your father and your mother, obey the King, submit yourselves to your pastors, order yourselves lowly to your betters, are true and just in all your dealings, bear no malice in your hearts, keep your hands from picking and stealing, your tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering, and your bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity, labour honestly to get your own living, and strive to do your duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call you—if, in addition to these virtues, you join those more important offices of piety, which

afford the surest guidance and the most powerful encouragements for the exercise of love to your neighbours—if you reverence your infinitely great, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, and infinitely merciful God—if you worship him—if you give him thanks —if you put your whole trust in him—if you honour his sacred word, and if, remembering his goodness to yourselves and your fellow-creatures, you love him with all your heart, with all your minds, with all your souls, and with all your strength, then, O my hearers! happy will you be in your several stations on this side of the grave, and then too, at the day of judgment, as your affectionate well-wisher, and your Christian teacher, I shall myself be most happy, while I hear this gracious sentence pronounced upon you by the righteous Judge of all mankind, "Come ye, blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning."

SERMON XII.*

ON THE HABIT OF JUDGING UNRIGHTEOUSLY.

St. Matthew vii. 1.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

Our Saviour does not in these words interdict the magistrate from exercising the high duties of his office; for, guided by his personal wisdom, and supported by the use of his delegated authority, "Kings reign and princes decree righteousness." Neither does he require us to be careless or inactive, when crime stands before us without any uncertainty as to the fact, without any excuse from the motives, or any palliation from the circumstances. Silence in such a case would not only be painful to ourselves, but injurious to society. It would eventually encourage wickedness, by that kind of endurance which is often the result of apathy, and carries with it the appearance, and the effects too, of latent approbation. But, while our blessed Master leaves public justice and private reproof to their real and proper duties, he does forbid that harsh judgment which men are prone to pass upon their

* August 1813.

brethren without due consideration or honest intention, and which sometimes is a greater instance of depravity in those who pronounce it, than can be found in him upon whom it is pronounced. He, on whom your censures are thrown, may have been surprised into guilt by the dazzling temptation of profit to be obtained without effort and without hazard, by the sudden sallies of anger, or by the momentary and violent impulse of concupiscence. But the spirit by which you are actuated makes you restless, and tends to make you criminal by day and by night, and through months and years—it is stirred up alike by real and imputed faults—it finds its prey alike in the ingenuity and the dulness, the learning and the ignorance, the excellences and the infirmities of mankind—it affords you no animal gratification, no worldly gain, nor any other advantage, than the infernal pleasure of inflicting pain without provocation and without remorse. Who then art thou that judgest another man's servant, when by his own master alone he should stand or fall? Why dost thou presume to condemn a fellow sinner, who art thyself to appear before this same awful tribunal at the last day, and who at this moment mayest, in the sight of God, be more inexcusable?

There are few instances of precipitate and unfair construction upon human conduct more offensive, than those which Providence itself is supposed to confirm by some external calamity, or, as you call it, some terrible judgment. Do you then forget that our Saviour asked certain persons whe-

ther those Galilæans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the sacrifices, or whether the eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, were sinners above all other sinners at Jerusalem? Their guilt was notorious—their sufferings were conspicuous. But what was the answer of Christ to the question just now stated? "I say unto you, nay." What was the caution subjoined to that answer? "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." Thus, in the text, what are you forbidden? To judge. What is the ground of that prohibition? That you be not yourselves judged,—that, having shewn no mercy to man, ye must expect none from God,—that, having disregarded justice, or carried it to excess, you must look for a heavenly judge, who will be extreme to mark what is done amiss by yourselves. The prosperity or security granted to men often becomes an encouragement for them to defame their neighbours. When misfortune overtakes them, every accidental oversight, every involuntary omission, every momentary failing, is brought forward against them in fierce array. And do you forget, my brethren, that God sometimes permits his most faithful servants to be visited with temporal evils, that he may put their patience and humility to the trial, and bring them nearer to himself? Doubtless there are some sins which, with more or less probability, may be traced in their consequences, The heedless spendthrift, the inveterate drunkard, the daring and unprincipled robber, may respectively be overtaken by the entire loss of property, or the rapid decay of health, or the ignominious forfeiture

of life. But I am now speaking of less frequent or less unpardonable faults, and to magnify them is to ensure our own condemnation.

Even in the absence of a deliberate desire to do mischief, conversation is often debased by feigned or overstrained accounts of miscarriages, little known or little regarded till some busy spirit makes them visible to all the world. Who, indeed, among ourselves, has not had occasion to be disgusted or alarmed, when our own infirmities have been ungenerously proclaimed and spitefully exaggerated? When bad men, for their own bad purposes, have imputed to us offences which we never committed, or represented our real faults in the blackest colours? But that nice sense of honour which, under the guidance of religion, would preserve us from doing ill to mankind, will also render us anxious to avoid the appearance of evil. It resists accusation and anticipates excuse—it teaches us to interpose where we can extenuate, and to be silent or candid where we cannot acquit. But are the destroyers of reputation aware that, while they are pouring forth their reproaches upon detected or acknowledged sins, the sinner himself may, by his sighs, his tears, his poignant sorrow, and active amendment, have made his peace with God? And, when reconciliation has been thus accomplished in Heaven, will they dare to wage relentless war upon earth? Do they reflect that a crafty rival, or a vindictive foe, may take advantage of opprobrious tales, and thus inflict upon a fellow-creature a much deeper wound than it was their own wish for him to suffer? Do they con-

sider that they are measuring the wisdom of a fellow-creature by their own ignorance, his generosity by their own selfishness, and his just displeasure by their own revengeful tempers? If they are callous to the anguish of the individual himself, have they no tenderness for innocent families, no reserve of compassion for the hoary parent, the weeping wife, and the helpless offspring? It were no breach of charity, then, to assume that such slanderers know not distinctly the value of that good name which Solomon pronounces better than riches or precious ointment. They in all probability never possessed this treasure—they never had the pleasing and salutary consciousness of deserving it. Considering it as a good unattainable to themselves, they resolve either rudely to pluck, or insidiously to filch it from others by whom it has been acquired. They are confirmed in their resolution by the alliance of envy with malice, and are more solicitous to injure a fair character, because they feel that it is merited. Hence, towards the talents which they possess not—towards the knowledge which they have acquired not—towards the veracity, equity, candour, and moderation, which they practise not, they will indulge the most odious excesses of hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. They envy without the activity or diligence of emulation—they deride what they cannot understand. On their sleepless pillows they meditate schemes of mischief, and through each revolving day they display their capacity and their fondness for coarse buffoonery or brutal insolence. Talk to them of the religious

motives to candour, they, like the deaf adder, stop their ears against the unwelcome truth. Set before them the example of Jesus, who was no less ready to forgive sins than to heal bodily infirmities, they will pretend that it is their principal aim to discountenance vice and reform the world. But in contradiction to malignity thus combined with hypocrisy we might justly say,—Cast out the beam that is in thy own eye, and then, but not till then, shalt thou see clearly to take out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Slanderers we ourselves must sometimes meet, who endeavour to hide their base purposes under the most plausible excuses. Of contumely, disguised under the semblance of commendation, we have a striking instance in the first lesson of to-day. Jehu issues his commands for the children of Ahab to be destroyed, and he selects his instruments from the nobles of his court and the captains in his army, in order to involve them in the guilt of shedding royal blood, and to prevent the fickle multitude from finding leaders in any future revolt. Ye, said the crafty king, be righteous. Behold, Jehu slew his master; but who slew so many? Instead of upbraiding me for my crimes, look to your own; and as we have a common cause, let us not weaken it by dissention and mutual reproach. Again, like clamorous and selfish loyalists of later ages, Jehu conformed to idolatry, while Ahab, his royal master, was in prosperity. Hence the priests of Baal, who had known his former habits of worship, could not distrust the proclamation which he had issued

for assembling them, and while they feared to disobey a ferocious conqueror, they cherished the expectation of gaining his favour to their own corrupt religion. But when the sanguinary deceiver had insidiously said to the priests of Baal,—"Search, and look that there be here with you none of the worshippers of the Lord, but the servants of Baal only;" and when, confiding in Jehu's protection, they proclaimed the sacrifice, he suddenly held the language of accusation to the guard and the captains, "Go in and slay them." But did he act from sincere aversion to their religion? No. He had been zealous for Baal while Ahab reigned in full power, and he was a favourite—he was zealous for the Lord, in order to get the throne—he was equally zealous for the calves that were in Bethel or in Dan, in order to secure the sceptre, because he feared that by inviting the people to the temple of Jehovah he should revive in them their antient attachment to the family of David, and lose the support of his nobles, who had been long attached to the impure rites which Jeroboam had introduced, and which he from wicked policy had determined to restore.

Upon the same principle of factitious zeal for any forms of religion, and real indifference to all, he, if it had suited his ambition, or his rage, or his fears, would by some ambiguous or courteous message have assembled the servants of Jehovah in their sanctuary, and then, reviling them before his obsequious vassals, he would have exclaimed,—Unsheath the sword against these impious adorers of the God

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and see that not one be left to spread the treacherous tale, and inflame their blind adherents. Jehu fulfilled—as unrighteous men are often permitted to do—the just and awful judgments of the Deity against the sinful family of Ahab. He was a legitimate disciple of a school much frequented in ancient and modern times—by turns he could be an encomiast and a reviler, a conformist and an apostate, a courtier and an insurgent.

There are to whom God has given great powers of understanding and the inestimable benefits of education. But habitual moroseness, or latent jealousy, has such an effect upon them that they chiefly wish to obtain celebrity by the acrimony of their invectives and the keenness of their sarcasms. They conduct themselves as if it were their supreme good to trample upon the strength, or sport with the weakness of their fellow-creatures. But, instead of endeavouring to awaken their pity, we should rather appeal to their ambition. We should remind them, that performances, which owe their popularity to personal abuse, gradually sink into contempt or oblivion: for a season, I grant, they may amuse the idle, and gratify the ill-natured; but they disgust men of reflection—they turn the attention of the public from the contents of a book to the spirit of the author—they become incumbrances to the very matter which they were intended to enliven or embellish—and they defeat by every goodly purpose, if such a purpose ever existed, of communicating know-

ledge to the intelligent and the impartial. They who do not aspire to literary fame, but walk in the common path of life, would do well to consider that the satire, which in a season of gaiety is heard with applause, will in the calm hour of reflection be remembered with indignation. If the claims of friendship have been disregarded—if every character has in its turn been sacrificed—if genius has been depreciated—if virtue has been ridiculed—if truth has been violated, most assuredly, with what judgment men judge, shall they be judged, and with what measure they mete, it shall be measured to them again.

In the circle of conviviality we may be cheered with the vivacity, and charmed with the brilliancy, of the slanderer; but, if we could pursue him into his retirement—if we could perceive what passes in his mind, when in the darkness of the night and the dreariness of solitude he is compelled to commune with his own throbbing heart—if we could see the deep and tempestuous agitations of his mind, when his own actions are misrepresented, or his own reputation even justly attacked, perhaps we should find him in the same forlorn and disgraceful condition with Joseph's brethren, and hear him thus pass sentence on himself: Verily, I have been guilty concerning other men — no discretion led me to keep a watch over the door of my lips—no pity softened my own heart, when I could indulge pride, envy, resentment, or create temporary amusement at the expence of peace and profit, and fame to my

neighbours. Bent upon a destructive end, I regarded not the unrighteous means; therefore is this distress come upon me—therefore I am accused, but have no advocate; I am afflicted, but have no comforter; I am ruined, but have no helper. Every bosom is steeled against my sufferings—every voice is raised against my crimes—every finger points with scorn at my person—every hand is lifted up for my destruction. If there be any such persons within the sphere of your own acquaintance, upon every principle of prudence as well as justice, and for your own sakes as well as for the benefit of your fellow-creatures, it becomes you not to give them encouragement by re-echoing, or even listening to, their calumnious tales. Recollect that in all ages men have been so perverse, that neither spotless innocence nor distinguished excellence could escape from their attacks—with yet greater seriousness remember that the Lord himself was vilified as a glutton and a wine-bibber, and the friend of publicans and sinners. But in proportion as wisdom is thus insulted by the wicked, let it be your wish and your endeavour that she be justified of her children.

For that end I shall now give you some particular directions, which your own experience will make very intelligible, and which I know to be very interesting to every one of my hearers.

Are you rich? Do not bereave your inferiors of reputation; for it is one of the few precious blessings they can enjoy in common with yourselves.

Nor do wrong to your own class by provoking that jealousy which is ever on the watch to exalt itself by debasing superiors.

Are you poor? Remember that your daily bread depends upon your well-acquired character for sobriety, industry, and honesty; and that the deformity of slander in you is not disguised, as it often is among your betters, by the fascinating influence of high-sounding titles, numerous retinues, gorgeous mansions, and luxurious banquets.

Are you young? Do not look with an evil eye upon the world before the world has defrauded or oppressed you. Do not carry into it a disposition which quickly will make you suspected by others, if you are prone to suspect. Do not by anticipation indulge the discontent which repeated disappointments and heavy misfortunes usually generate, and which, having generated, they seldom justify. Be assured that the loudest reprovers of sin are not always the least sinful—that you are yourselves unavoidably surrounded by many ensnaring allurements to vice and folly, and that, if you should ever give way to youthful passions, you can have no claim to that lenient construction which you have yourselves neglected to put on the misbehaviour of your fellow-creatures.

Are you old? To the other inconveniences and weaknesses of this time of life do not add that spirit of censoriousness, which must destroy the pity and respect we are inclined to preserve to grey hairs; and recollect that, if all the faults you have committed in youth, in manhood, and old age, were brought

together into one point of view, finding them more in number than the hairs of your head, you may not be able to look up, and they, whom you rashly judge, might with good reason consider you as objects of hatred or contempt.

Are you in your general habits of life just and well-disposed? Do not tarnish these Christian graces by impertinent or defamatory discourse. Are you unfortunately under the dominion of a harsh and churlish disposition? For your own sakes judge not, when you are in such imminent danger of being judged—when your own example will be urged against you by your accusers—when they whom you have tormented will justify themselves as tormentors by the law of retaliation—and when no eye will pity you, while smarting under the anguish which you have yourselves inflicted so frequently and so cruelly.

To men I would say generally, with all the topics which erudition, history, poetry, science in its various branches, politics, and the nobler and weightier concerns of human life, will abundantly supply for profitable or entertaining discourse, squander not your time upon frivolous tales, or in acrimonious revilings.

To females I should address myself with far greater earnestness. I should remind them of the numerous and innocent amusements that are placed before them. I should exhort them to fill up every returning day, and every passing hour, with those domestic duties, which in them are not only useful, but even ornamental—with those various accom-

plishments, which employ the eye, the ear, or the hand, and which give them opportunities for displaying originality in design or skilfulness in execution—with those intellectual pursuits of a yet higher order, which shew their ingenuity and taste to the best possible advantage, and throw a peculiar air of gracefulness over their conversation and their writings. Surely it is becoming and desirable for you thus to improve your understanding—to regulate your tempers—to find what will exercise without fatiguing you, in winter and summer, and from the rising to the setting sun—to escape at once the listlessness of indifference and the satiety of dissipation—to impart in some measure to amusement the regularity of business, and to business the ease and gaiety of amusement. At all events, thus to lay out your hours of leisure and exertion is far more becoming and far more desirable than by whisperings and by taunts, by oblique insinuation, or by boisterous abuse to give unmerited pain to the blushing virgin, the venerable matron, the unsuspecting visitor, or the unassuming and peaceable neighbour. Mark well, I beseech you, that in the description given by Solomon of the woman whose price is greater than rubies, you read, " her mouth uttereth wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Ponder well the situation in which you are actually placed by the wholesome usages of society, and the unperverted and kindliest sentiments of the human heart. So it is that the reception you look for in every walk of life, and the hold you have

on the esteem and affection of good men, depend upon those habits, in which the embellishments of manners are blended with the more important, more solid, and more hallowed excellences of morality. Hence, as on the one hand meekness of disposition, and abstinence from scandal, shed additional lustre upon your prudence, your cheerfulness, your chastity, and your piety, so, on the other hand, a busy, sarcastic, calumnious turn of mind, becomes in you particularly offensive and formidable—offensive, because it clashes with all our preconceived opinions of what is most fitting in you, and most amiable—formidable, because it is accompanied now and then by a fertility of invention, and sprightliness of remark, and felicity of diction, which for a time conceal from the observer the lurking venom. It is a desertion of that small and flowery, yet straight and secure path, which nature has pointed out for you. It is an abandonment of the homage to which you are entitled by that good sense, that delicacy, that tender sensibility, which are deservedly considered as your indispensable duties and distinguishing ornaments. It is a deliberate and perverse assumption of the more odious and pernicious qualities which it should be your glory, not to imitate, but to restrain and soften in the hardier sex; and which in that sex—not your own—may sometimes be expiated by the sterner and more arduous virtues, not attainable by you, and therefore not required from you. Conscious indeed I am of speaking the language, not of courtesy, which is ill adapted to

the house of God, but of sincerity and seriousness, when I say that, with every well-educated and well-disposed woman, as well as every contemplative and benevolent man, in every Christian congregation, and every civilized company, a female atheist, a female libertine, and a female slanderer, cannot fail to excite an instantaneous and vehement feeling of abhorrence.

To conclude: At a future opportunity I shall resume the topics suggested to us by the text, and lay before you such additional considerations as may bring home to the bosoms and the business of men the importance of the command, given to avoid precipitate and uncharitable constructions upon human conduct. Well, indeed, does it become us to recollect the solemn and authoritative declaration of our Redeemer, that every idle word shall be brought into judgment; and whatsoever difference of opinion there may be among learned men upon the grammatical import of that which is imperfectly and obscurely translated "idle," be assured that the warning includes every deliberate falsehood, every malicious interpretation, and every harsh report, by which our fellow-creatures are undeservedly annoyed. If, then, by the strife of tongues the harmony of families is disturbed—if the feelings of unoffending or meritorious individuals are severely wounded—if their mistakes and their failings are wantonly exaggerated—if their talents and virtues are insidiously depreciated, heinous indeed will be your guilt, and heavy will be your punishment.

But of those who now hear me I would hope better things. I would wish them to consider that they are not only discharging their own duty, but securing their own happiness, by habits of candour and kindness. To him, indeed, who looks, as becomes a wise observer and a sincere Christian to look, at the negligences and ignorances, and even the sins of his fellow-creatures, the whole moral world assumes a brighter aspect. He perceives the tendency of evil itself to produce good, when it exercises the compassion of the spectator and humbles the pride of the offender. Though in vice he must discern all its loathsome qualities, and all its destructive effects, he at the same time will be consoled by the discovery of every circumstantial extenuation, and tracing it to its cause in some virtuous principle not quite extinguished, he will endeavour to call that principle into more vigorous action, and to extricate it from the incumbrance of all the untoward inclinations and practices which have hitherto impeded its operation. Virtue he will behold in its native and unclouded lustre: he will hold it up to the veneration of mankind, and, by well-founded applause and well-timed encouragement he will give a wider extent to the influence of good example. Sweet will be his slumbers, when he reflects that for days and months and years he has soothed the afflicted, vindicated the innocent, and animated the meritorious; and at the awful hour of death, remembering the tenderness which he has shewn to the errors and failings of his fellow-creatures, he will be

able without presumption to cherish the consolatory hope, that the mercy which he has exercised towards others will be abundantly granted to his own imperfections, when he stands before the tribunal of a most righteous and omniscient Judge.

SERMON XIII.

ST. MATTHEW vii. 1.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

In a former Discourse, having made some preliminary and general remarks on the guilt of forming harsh judgments, I directed your attention to a series of particular circumstances, in which the evil properties and evil consequences of censoriousness were equally prominent to your good sense, and offensive to your good feelings. I explained to you how unsafe and unbecoming it was among the rich, and how dangerous to the poor—how inconsistent it is with the ingenuousness of youth and the seriousness of age—for the use of congregations differently constituted from that which I here address, I had further endeavoured to shew how base is detraction in men of vigorous and cultivated intellects, to whom learning, science, and the nobler concerns of human life, present other and more abundant sources for rational amusement or instructive investigation—and, above all, I earnestly endeavoured to shew how fatal it is to that prudence, that delicacy, and that tender sensibility, which are justly esteemed the indispensable duties and characteristic

ornaments of females. It now remains for me to take a fuller view of the subject, and again to bring home, as I lately proposed, to the bosoms and business of men, the importance of the command given us to shun precipitate and uncharitable constructions upon human conduct, upon the motives of agents, and the qualities of actions. In addition to the many and weighty considerations which differences of fortune, ages, and sex, have already suggested to us, I would now remind you that, amidst all the varieties which are to be found in the moral characters of men, there is not one but what must give them a strong and immediate interest in the efficiency of those restraints, which the prohibition given in the text is designed to impose upon unwarrantable reproach. Even they whose general habits are not very praiseworthy, and whose general dispositions are not very amiable, ought by no means to be harassed by indiscriminate censure. On a near and fair inspection, it might be discovered that to some one virtue or other they are more or less attacked, and that they sincerely lothe some vices. Though venal in public, they may be honest in private life. Though enslaved to the tyranny of avarice and ambition, they may abstain from gross and profligate sensuality—they may be skilful and diligent in their respective callings—they may be valiant defenders of their country—they may in the discharge of their parental, or their filial, or their conjugal duties, be exact. But should they be deprived of praise for what they do well? Should they be exposed to blame for the evil which they

have not done? And must they not be aware that the real imperfections of which they are conscious will raise up against them a numerous host of enemies, ever eager to bring forward accusations, and most ready to believe them? If we turn to the great mass of mankind, among whom good and evil are mixed in various proportions, they surely have a claim for their real merits not to be undervalued, and their real demerits not to be exaggerated; and yet the defamation, which I am now endeavouring to discourage, would wickedly bereave them of what common justice and common sense shew to be due to the majority of our fellow-creatures.

But the peculiar wickedness of slander is seen when it is exercised against persons eminently distinguished by the splendour of their talents or energies of their virtues. Envy is ever on the watch to expose and proclaim their slightest follies and most venial failings. Insidiously and delusively, it assigns their supposed wisdom, or their supposed sanctity, as a proof that, with greater powers to avoid evil, they incur greater guilt by falling into it. Such men, it is insinuated, never act without deliberation: what in others is the mere precipitation of judgment, in them proceeds from some latent and inveterate prejudice. The same actions which, in the generality of mankind, are said to flow from the sudden and transient influence of passion, must in them be ascribed to some rooted principle of depravity. Such is the spirit in which the officious and the malignant pass judgment on the well informed and well principled. So pertinent is the observation

which I lately made to you, that detraction alike finds its prey in the excellences and the infirmities of mankind. But pursuing, as I proposed to do, that detail which illuminates the propriety and facilitates the construction of general rules, I shall now lay before you other remarks, and other exhortations, which may act as preventives against the sin of unrighteous judgments, so expressly and solemnly interdicted, you must remember, by that Heavenly Teacher in whose heart there was no bitterness, and in whose lips there was no guile.

The evil of calumny has sometimes a much earlier beginning than you may suppose. Children, while their minds are as yet unfurnished with knowledge, and undisciplined by converse with the world, are very attentive to that kind of conversation which regards the characters of those whom they frequently approach. Their attention is encreased, when they have been accustomed to feel either blind admiration or servile fear. They are glad to laugh scornfully at the little singularities of those whom they admire, and to take a kind of revenge upon the faults of those whom they fear. Doubtless at a first superficial glance upon the minds of children there is much to love and much to commend in their innocence, their simplicity and their ingenuousness, during the absence, I mean, of temptation from the dangerous influence of rash companions, crafty advisers, and malignant parents. But, to those who look more deeply into the the seeds of corruption, there is much to be dreaded, much to be watched, much to be resisted in their peevish humours, in their

heedless petulance, in their love of the wonderful, in their desire of petty self-importance from acuteness or sprightliness, and their slender ability to balance evidence, to discriminate characters, and to calculate consequences. In truth, if the advice of a Roman poet for us to take care what we speak, and before whom it is spoken, be, as it is, of great usefulness in the general course of human affairs, it is peculiarly important in the regulation of our discourse, when children are the hearers. Let them not be permitted, therefore, to partake of our own prepossessions however endeared to us by habit, or our own resentments however just in appearance. That confidence which they repose in the expeperience and affection of the parent, let them not transfer to the asperity of the accuser or the levity of the witling. Let them be encouraged to respect the learned and the pious, to commiserate, not to deride, the unavoidable infirmities of the aged—to lament, not to reprobate, the occasional irregularities of the young—to guard against the commission of sin, but not to throw off all tenderness for others, whom they hastily suppose to be sinful, and to lay in humility and candour a foundation for their own good behaviour at that season when it will be their turn to be tempted by the lusts of the flesh and the vanities of the world. By the wise provision of nature the affections, whether social or unsocial, are of quicker growth than the coarser of our sensual appetites—they are sooner required for action for the personal preservation and progressive mental discipline of the individual—they are visible sooner in

their operations—they are sooner under the control of the agent himself, or his teacher, or parents; and for this reason it was that by the Roman law ignorance of right and wrong, though under certain circumstances, and for a certain season, admitted as an extenuation for some irregularities in lust, was rejected as a plea for the outrageous excesses of malice.

Well, children, you will say, are sportive, guileless, good-natured;—true, but they can lie, they can steal, they can be deceitful, froward, irascible, vindictive, and they are sure to become so incorrigibly, if from their infancy they have been accustomed to hear ill, think ill, speak ill, of their neighbours, and of course to expect ill from them, and to intend ill towards them, and prosecute ill against them. Hence they, who under a delusion, originally created by their own gloomy suspicions or unrestrained humours, begin defensively, soon proceed to act offensively. They who hate excuse hatred—they who do wrong must incur retaliation. Experience is then pleaded in vindication of the harsh judgment, which, in reality, was formed before experience, and produced the very mischiefs involved in experience; and thus thoughts, words, and deeds, wicked and unjust, are indefinitely multiplied, when they who, from childhood, youth, and manhood, were wont to judge harshly, upon their own principles, and according to their own examples, are harshly judged.

Let me, therefore, exhort every father and every mother who may now hear me, to bear constantly in their minds the words of a writer who, in genius,

knowledge, integrity, and piety, never was surpassed by any prelate of the English Church. His words are these: "It is God's great mercy to young persons, that they can understand fear as soon as they can learn to sin, and he that will let his children alone till they have a firm and settled judgment, will find at last habits fixed and permanent as the foot of a rock, and then good counsel will be a remedy too late and too easy."* With this long and hideous train of evils before me, beginning in childhood, and confirmed through all the successive stages of existence, I shall not have any reserves for false delicacy upon my own part, nor will I enter into any compromise with the fatuity and waywardness of misplaced parental fondness upon yours.

The caution, which I have just now given for the conduct of parents to their children, may properly be extended to masters in respect to their servants. That very superiority, of which they are impatient when it exacts lawful obedience, weighs very much with their judgment when it is directed against the reputation of other men. They listen eagerly—they understand imperfectly—they divulge rashly—they misrepresent negligently or maliciously—they sympathize with the contempt or the anger of a master, whose good qualities they discern not, or value not, or imitate not—they find in the loftiness of his station and the brilliancy of his wit instruments for giving greater publicity and greater importance to those tales, which their own obscurity might have

* Taylor's Ductor Dubitantum, book iv. rule 6, ch. 1.

made improbable, or their own dulness might have made insignificant. What I beseech you is the language of the servant, whom your own injudicious and defamatory conversation has emboldened to give vent to his pertness or his spleen? This morning, he will exclaim, my master laid upon me such and such a command—it was capricious and harsh; but he made amends for it in the afternoon by a most entertaining story about the absurdities or the irregularities of such and such neighbours; and never shall I again see them under this roof without detesting or despising them? But, after you have thus taught your dependents to take such liberties with your visitors, may not the same mischief ultimately fall upon yourselves? When they are dismissed from your service, and are no longer afraid of your displeasure, may they not divulge all they know and all they suspect to have happened in the privacy of your families, and will they not turn upon their former employers the peering eyes and itching ears and busy tongues of gossips who have no caution, and backbiters who have no compassion? Put the question fairly to your own conscience. Though armed with sufficient fortitude to bear the deserved frowns of a sage, or the deserved censures of a superior and an equal, do you not sometimes shrink from the foul and saucy taunts of low-born and low-bred varlets? Yet for these your inferiors, who never can separate even justice from insolence, and among whom truth itself is tainted with the venom which is usually mingled with falsehood, some excuse may be alleged from the very few to-

pics which the contents of instructive books, or knowledge of common life, or intercourse with sober-minded and well-informed companions, might suggest for their conversation. But your guilt is unaccompanied by any extenuation of this kind, and it is even aggravated by the ill use you make of the superior advantages you have for estimating the value of other and better subjects, which refresh the spirits, or exercise the memory, or delight the imagination, without contaminating the heart. The practice against which I am now warning you is, indeed, utterly inconsistent with the dignity of masters, the delicacy of gentlemen, and the candour of Christians. Before such hearers, then, and such reporters, as unlettered and inquisitive domestics usually are, it behoves you to be upon your guard —it behoves you not to supply them with materials for mischief by your words—it behoves you not to furnish them with a plea for impertinence and malice by your example.

There is a very common and a very contemptible species of scandal, from which I would gladly dissuade you, and I do so with the more earnestness because it seems to rest on some foundation, and because the evil consequences of it are not sufficiently considered. With a very slender stock of ingenuity, a very confined range for observation, and a very large share of flippancy or unfeelingness, it is easy for you to point the shafts of your ridicule against professions. Where is the clown so illiterate, the dunce so lumpish, the sciolist so shallow, as not to display the scintillations of his little wit against the

hypocrisy of priests, the impostures of physicians, the affected gravity of judges, the chicanery of lawyers, and the servility or profligacy of statesmen? Hence superficial observers often charge upon the employment itself what arises from the peculiar temperament or the peculiar habits of the persons employed; or they exaggerate facts, and passing over circumstances of time and place they accumulate upon individuals that odium which was justly excited by the acknowledged misconduct of other men, or the recorded offences of generations that have long passed away. No distinction is made between barbarous and civilized ages—none between free and despotic governments—none between corrupt and pure forms of religion. But wiser and more unprejudiced observers perceive that all the situations just now mentioned have more or less tendency to promote the public good—that he who brings into them a sincere desire to please God, and deserve well of mankind, will not offend very frequently nor very flagrantly—that in every class of society, and under every modification of external affairs, human infirmities will sometimes yield—that in all of them may be found well-informed and well-principled men, whose merits ought to be thrown into the balance as a counterpoise to the demerits of the ignorant and the worthless—that in the influence of situation itself there is good, upon the whole more than equivalent for the evil—that the priest diffuses true religion—that the physician alleviates pain and prolongs existence—that the judge secures our liberty and our property—that the lawyer, co-

operating with him, protects us from the wily cheat and the desperate ruffian—that the statesman suggests or executes wise counsels and assists in enacting wholesome laws—and that, if placed in other conditions, the really oppressive governor, whom we now see, the insolent magistrate, the supple courtier, the presumptuous empiric, the venal senator, and the cruel bigot, would have found or created opportunities for invading the rights and disturbing the repose of the communities to which they belong. Men of sense are aware that evil dispositions exist at all times and in all places—that vestiges of pride may be found in the lonesome cottage as well as the shining palace—that a spirit of domination breaks out in villages as well as cities—that in every condition, high or low, temptations to wrong will occur, and, having occurred, will sometimes prevail over every restraint of discretion, decorum, honesty, and benevolence. The chance of our vocation is often determined by various accidental causes, over which we have no control, by the avarice of parents or the vanity of advisers. But our personal behaviour depends on our personal intentions and efforts, and surely in every vocation every man has the power of paying obedience unto God, and rendering service to mankind. Every man must have diligence, temperance, probity, and piety within his reach; and he that cultivates these virtues ought not to be annoyed by the prattle of the officious, the sneers of the petulant, or the reproaches of the uncharitable.

Through all these unkind remarks, which I am

now considering, there runs the common fallacy of arguing against the use of things from their abuse; and the morality of these head-strong censors stands upon a footing with their logic. It will be granted, I suppose, that according to different circumstances the tribute of respect or gratitude is due to such persons, as in their several callings make a right use of their abilities, and avail themselves of the opportunities peculiarly afforded to them to deserve well from society; but where is the chance that the tribute of approbation confessedly due, will not be refused to the most praiseworthy by the perverse, the jealous, or the inconsiderate, when abuse is charged indiscriminately and peremptorily—when the reports of such abuse are propagated industriously—when the truth of their reports is believed implicitly?

Let us then strive to gain the mastery over every bad habit of uttering invectives, which however general in terms they may be, and however inoffensive they may appear at first sight, will in some heedless or angry moment be pointed with the sharpest edge of personality. Transient amusement is no justification for witticisms teeming with the most mischievous consequences. Do you not assent to the reply made by the wretched and helpless animals in the fable, to their wanton destroyers? This is play to you, but to us perdition. Can you forget the ignominious name with which Solomon has branded the wretch who, scattering firebrands, exclaims, "Am I not in sport?" In some unforeseen and unfortunate moment may not the ridicule, aimed by you at

some useful art, deprive an honest, industrious, and ingenious artist of his subsistence or his good name? Instead, therefore, of indulging ourselves in these most unbecoming habits, let us rather look to the brighter and indeed the truer side of persons and things. Let us recollect that as members of society we belong to a body, where every part has its separate use, and is necessary to the well-being of the whole—let us not forget that if any of these arts or professions, which contribute to the support or even the embellishment of life were utterly lost, the consequences of that loss must fall upon ourselves or our families, upon our contemporaries or their posterity — that there would be no religious guides, no spiritual comforters, no skilful preservers of bodily health, no authoritative protectors of our civil rights, no sage and faithful and vigilant and effectual guardians of the public weal. But if we judge harshly of them in their official capacities, the just punishment that awaits us is, that for our own actions in private life we shall be judged severely. Our fellow creatures will deride us—our own hearts will condemn us—and from God it were vain to implore that mercy, which we have never wished, nor attempted to practise towards mankind.

From what has been said on the turpitude and danger of unrighteous judgments, let me not be supposed to give the least countenance to that spurious candour, which views every opinion and treats every character with undistinguishing or unprincipled indifference. I do not advise to throw

into artificial confusion the moral properties and names of actions, in which the happiness of moral agents is deeply concerned. In me you will never find an instructor for you voluntarily to deceive and to be deceived—to become dastardly and obsequious respecters of persons, to prophesy smooth things, that ye may captivate the vain, or shelter the wicked, nor for the sake of fleeting popularity to call evil good and good evil. There is I am aware, a race of specious and smiling flatterers, who insidiously and ostentatiously commend the vicious, lest the same commendation bestowed upon the virtuous should procure for them the distinction which they really merit. But who would set any high value on praise thus bestowed and thus intended? Or who would be so beguiled, as to think highly of his own faults, because exempted from censures thus restrained? Our nature gives us a quick perception of the difference between good and evil. Our religion does not command us on all occasions to dissemble or to repress it, when our own safety or our own honour calls upon us to speak according to our real and unprejudiced conviction of demerit in other men. Not to feel so were to confound truth and falsehood—not to act so were to degrade the worthy to a level with the wicked. Did not our Lord himself reprove the pharisees with the utmost severity? Did not St. Paul speak of some wicked converts as deserving excommunication? Did not John the Baptist rebuke vice boldly? Did not St. Peter and St. Jude employ the most vehement language against notorious and obdurate sinners?

But, when we plead apostolical example, let us examine our own bosoms and be quite sure that we are governed by motives quite worthy of an Apostle. The case stands thus:—Religion is never at variance with sound reason, and sound reason informs us that, as we are required to act among other men and for other men, as well as from ourselves and for ourselves, it is necessary for us to form some clear judgment upon their characters, while we strictly endeavour to explore, to correct, or to improve our own. By their fruits alone can they be known, and the honour as well as the security of ourselves may be deeply concerned in acquiring that knowledge. By their fruits ye shall know them. But what are the sound fruits which adorn, and the corrupt which deform the human mind, you may learn from that which the Apostle enjoins, and that which he forbids men, at the end of the lesson read to you this day—he charges his Roman converts "to put off the works of darkness" as an incumbrance unseemly to be worn by the professed disciples of Jesus—"to put on," not "the armour," (as you read in your version,) but "the dress and garb adapted to the light." He charges them not to walk "in rioting and drunkeness," "in chambering and wantonness," as they had been accustomed to do among their heathen companions, and "in strife and envying" towards their Christian brethren, as some of them were yet disposed to do.

If therefore men in their daily conversation are immodest, censorious, or profane—if the sabbath, a portion of which ought to be dedicated to the offices

of devotion, is perpetually squandered by them in coarse tumultuous debauchery—if they are intent upon sowing discord among their relations or their neighbours—if they employ their wealth, or their power, or their perverted understandings in provoking the patient and insulting the humble—if they turn a deaf ear to the prayers of the poor, and spurn the reasonable complaints of the widow and the orphan—if they sicken on beholding as they are compelled to behold, the good qualities, and hearing as they are compelled to hear, the good name of their acquaintance—if they depreciate the abilities which they never possessed, and the virtues which they never practised—if they make differences in religious or political opinions a ground for personal invective and even personal injury—if they brood over petty or imaginary wrongs to justify themselves in overt acts of fell and infuriate vengeance—if they stoop to the ignominious artifices of mercenary accusers, or lean upon the support of perjured auxiliaries—if, rushing beyond the limits of frailty they plunge into libertinism, and make a mock of sin committed under the most aggravated seduction to the unsuspecting virgin or the affectionate wife —if they find a plea for fraud, extortion, pharasaical pride, and intolerant bigotry, in the exterior severity of their manners, the assumed orthodoxy of their faith, and the boasted plenitude of their grace—in all such cases good and wise men will judge them, and contrast their wicked dispositions with opposite and better properties. They will be led so to judge, and warranted in so judging

by their love of real wisdom and real goodness. From motives of sound prudence they will form a judgment that shall enable them to protect themselves and their fellow creatures from lurking envy and outrageous hatred. They will act under the guidance of a judgment not widely dissimilar from that which, if those odious sinners repent not, will be hereafter proclaimed before men and angels, when the last trump shall have sounded, and the oppressor, the scorner, and the profligate, shall be raised from their graves, and receive from God himself a dreadful and irreversible sentence of condemnation.

Now experience tells us that other men act from their ruling passion, from latent views of profit, or honour, or revenge—from the silent, and to themselves almost imperceptible, influence of prepossessions and humours, of early habits and uncontroled affections. But it also tells us that our own judgments are frequently misguided by our own prejudices and humours, by our credulous acquiescence in groundless rumours, by our undue predilections for individuals, and our excessive attachment to the interests and credit of a particular profession, a political party, or a religious sect. It tells us that men of discernment and candour are disgusted and even incensed at the proneness of polemics indirectly to arrogate to themselves superior sagacity or superior sanctity—to charge criminal intentions upon the ablest and fairest advocates of speculative opinions different from their own—and thus to judge harshly, and it may be erroneously, of their fellow labourers

in the search after truth, while they are themselves in danger of being judged. But in order to perceive the guilt of such judgments, we need not wait for the slow decisions of our minds upon elaborate and formal proofs of duty and propriety. With the rapidity as it were, and the vivacity of instinct, nature herself bears witness to the ascendancy, which the benevolent affections ought to have over the unsocial. When we find ourselves to have formed an unjust opinion of enlightened and well principled men, we instantly feel shame and compunction—we retrace our thoughts, and would gladly recall our words. But, when our error is on the favourable side, we lament indeed the mistake, but smart under no humiliating or mortifying chastisement from within, in our reflections upon the motive—we have not judged criminally, and therefore in this instance we fear not to be judged.

To conclude. For our general guidance in practice, and our general consolation under evil report, let us avail ourselves of the instructions which the Scriptures have given us for acquiring the habit of judging righteously. Have we not errors, prejudices, humours, and irregular appetites of our own? Are they not sometimes unaccompanied by any efforts of self-command, and sometimes unsuspected by ourselves through the blindness of self-love? And yet, my brethren, for our secret faults, as well as our more open and presumptuous sins, must we not one day render an account before the Searcher of all hearts? These awful reflections will instantly impress us with feelings of Christian

humility, and gradually prepare us for the exercise of Christian charity. The properties of that virtue you shall hear in the ardent and energetic language of an inspired Apostle: "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not, vaunteth not itself, does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." May this charity, in its full extent, and with all its blessed effects, take possession of your hearts! Then you will check the violence of false tongues, and "follow, as much as lieth in you, peace with all men." You will lay up for yourselves the well-earned reward of esteem from your fellow-creatures, and the well-grounded hope of approbation from your Heavenly Father, as faithful guardians to the reputation of the virtuous, as useful promoters of tranquillity and good will in families and neighbourhoods, and as sincere followers of your most holy and benevolent Redeemer!

SERMON XIV.*

ON FAITH.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS xi. 6.

But without Faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.

THE instructive and comprehensive import of these words deserves our serious attention, whether we consider them as employed to illustrate the reasoning of the sacred writer in this and a preceding chapter upon the facts which he has there stated, or as presenting to us concisely and perspicuously the fundamental principles of all religion, whether speculative or practical, whether natural or revealed.

Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony, that he pleased God; but that he pleased God was a proof of his faith, and his translation was the recompence of that faith exercising itself in correspondent works—of a principle fixed in the understanding and ruling the will—a principle, convincing Enoch that God is, and impelling him to please

* July 1812.

God as the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Now, in opposition to the infidel who ridicules the intellectual weakness of faith, and the fanatic who contends for its exclusive efficacy, I must observe to you, that the Faith of which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks, though in some part it includes the belief of a Messiah, must not be confined to the signification of mere assent to the evidences of Christianity, but extends to the persuasion of the human mind upon all those subjects and doctrines, in which the existence of a Deity, his attributes, his moral government of the world, and his protection of righteous men, both in the ordinary and extraordinary dispensation of his providence, are concerned; and, indeed, by a logical series of consequences, leads us to the consideration of a future life, in which the justice, wisdom, and benevolence of God will become conspicuous by the happiness he will confer on those, who seek him earnestly, and obey him constantly.

Faith, we are told, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; and in this explanation the present, you find, is distinguished from the future, belief from knowledge, expectation from possession. The word substance, as some learned men suppose, corresponds to the expression which the Septuagint translators have used in rendering two Hebrew words, Tuhelit and Tequa, which originally meant confidence or reliance, say they. Thus in the Greek Old Testament, we have the same word which occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ὑποστασις, my *hope* is in thee. But I

would rather adopt the opinion of a judicious commentator, who, like Grotius, Whitby, and Bishop Conybeare, rejecting substance as vague and unsound, understood by it the ground or foundation of belief. Thus in Psalm xxxix. 7. "the ground of my hope is in thee;" in Ezekiel xix. 5. "when she saw that she had waited, and the ground of her hope was lost." Thus too St. Paul, in the ninth and the eleventh chapters of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, speaks of the *confidence* (as you read) that is the ground-work of boasting. Thus too in the third of the Epistles to the Hebrews—we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our *confidence*, or rather the ground of our expectation, steadfast unto the end.

I need not apologize for this attempt to give clearer conceptions than what the word substance can supply on so weighty a subject; and you will do well to contrast what you now hear with the clamorous boastings, and senseless jargon, of certain evangelical preachers, who are ambitious of vaulting into the chair of criticism, as the illuminated expositors of a very difficult passage in a very difficult Epistle.

Of Faith, then, as implying the fixed expectation of its object, you in the chapter of the text have an example in Noah, who relied upon the promise of God to protect him and his family from the approaching deluge. Of Faith, as relating to the evidence, that is, the argument or proper proof of things not seen, you have an illustration in the general belief that the worlds were formed by the word of God,—for so you read in our English ver-

sion. Here, as some learned men hold, the original word, rendered *worlds*, is employed because it was familiar to the Hellenistic Jews, and signified among them *ages*, and the dispensations that occurred to them. Hence some interpret the words thus —not the worlds were formed, but the *ages* were fitted—they were put into such order of succession as was adapted to the gracious designs of God; and such was *the* age or dispensation of religion from Adam to the Flood, that from the Flood to the Patriarchs, that from the Patriarchs to the Law, that from the Law to the coming of Christ, and from this grand event to the end of the world. That God ordained these *ages*, not worlds, was an object of faith. Others consider the expression as meaning worlds, and then our faith is directed to the whole system of the universe, and its consummate order; for the idea of such order, though imperfectly conveyed to you in your English translation, is certainly included in the original word; and here, my brethren, would be presented to your faith the magnificent spectacle of all created beings, animate and inanimate, visible and invisible, moral and intellectual, as they have existed, do exist, and will exist, through the immeasurable expanse of space, from the first energies of their omniscient and omnipotent Maker, in continued succession through endless ages.

Now, by the laws of association, the direct objects of our senses become eventually the objects of faith, when traced to their cause. The visible world was formed by the invisible God; but if our conviction were to stop at this point—if we

only admitted the being of a God, and ascribed the creation of the universe to Almighty Power, the immediate operations of which never can be discovered by our senses, and are faintly conceived by our imaginations, then, surely, our faith would be incomplete and unprofitable. For before we can be anxious to please him—before we can come to him from a sense of duty—before we can exert all our faculties in fulfilling the purposes for which we seem to be placed here with the capacities of rational and moral creatures, it is necessary for us to have a well-grounded expectation of distant things; to have examined seriously, and admitted unfeignedly, the proper proofs of things not seen; to look to the arrival of these things from the direct appointment of that God to whom we come with affiance, because we have been taught to believe, not only that he exists, but that in due time he will manifest himself as the rewarder of those who are sincere in their faith, fervent in their devotions, and steadfast in their obedience.

The sacred writer had, in the foregoing chapter, laid down this general maxim—the just shall live by Faith; and in this chapter he adduces from the Old Testament various examples of faith, exercised on various occasions, and ascertained by various marks of God's approbation. But it will become you to take notice, that in all these examples he represents faith to you, not merely as an opinion deeply lodged in the mind, and often expressed by the tongue, but as a principle of conduct; and that he enumerates actions themselves as the evidences and effects—the decisive evidences and the legitimate effects of faith.

Enoch so walked as to please God; Noah prepared an ark; Abraham went to a place which he should receive for an inheritance, not knowing whither he went, but determined, we read, to obey; and in that obedience was involved voluntary departure from his native land, and voluntary abandonment of his primary interests in it. In the same spirit he conquered parental affection, and was prepared to offer up Isaac. In the same spirit Moses resolved rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. In the same spirit, Gideon, Samson, David, Jephtha, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and waxed valiant in fight. In the same spirit with which these men acted, others were contented to suffer; they had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and were actuated by a fixed and lively confidence in God. Many of them, it is true, experienced only temporal protection; but that protection having been promised to them by the deity, and attained from causes which fell not within the ordinary course of human affairs, was the direct and proper object of their persuasion, that he was able and willing to rescue them from evil. Others, who obtained a good report through faith, might be influenced by the prospect of future reward; for by such means alone, it is probable, could they have been supported, when they were destitute, afflicted, tormented. But to us Christians, who have received the promise which they did not receive, and for whom better things were provided, the belief of God as the rewarder of those who seek him, is more sure as a doctrine, and carries it with stronger ob-

ligations as well as clearer directions upon all those points of experience and practice, by which we may so please God as to attain the recompence of eternal life. Thus you see, that of faith, even according to the scriptural sense of the word, there are many kinds, many degrees, and many corresponding rewards—that in all of them the assent of our judgment is accompanied by the consent of our will—that this consent leads us to perform the known commands of the deity—and that the ground of obligation to that performance lies not in the solitary conviction that God is, but in the concomitant reliance we have on his justice and mercy, as our judge.

My hearers, plain and unadorned on a slight view as may be the language of holy writ, it contains the very profoundest principles, which the very wisest sages have professed to investigate; and upon large, deep, and impartial inquiry, it will even be seen, that the most indissoluble connection and the most perfect harmony subsist between that, which the Christian maintains upon the ground and obligation of faith, and that, which the true philosopher defends, as the deduction of well-directed and unprejudiced reason. Hence indeed we may account for the extravagant and licentious opinions, which have been asserted with so much indecent eagerness, and propagated with such dangerous effects in the present age. As long as Christianity was believed and revered, the enemies of our cause were aware that the human mind was better prepared to explore and appreciate the evidences, which human reason itself

is able to discover for the defence of natural religion;—while that evidence was investigated honestly and seriously, it gave additional strength to the commands and promises of revelation, and cooperated with them on enlarging the boundaries of human knowledge, and promoting the noblest interests of piety and virtue. We are not therefore to wonder, that some persons, who would estrange us from our trust in a Redeemer, have endeavoured to efface every vestige of the proofs, which had been usually adduced with success for the providential character, the moral government, and even the existence of the Deity. In abstract speculation, indeed, men may be supposed to infer, from the order and beauty of the natural world, that the origin of it must be referred to an intelligent cause, and that the conclusions of our understandings extend no further. But in all reasoning upon the duty and happiness of man from the constitution of his nature, we must attend, not to insulated particulars, but to connected generalities; not to conjectures upon what may be, but to the evidence of what is; not to visionary refinements in theology, but to the ordinary course and visible properties of action. Experience then proves that in the secret, though disguised conviction of the infidel, and in the avowed and well-founded motives of the Christian, the human mind is impatient of being confined within the narrow boundaries which have sometimes been despotically prescribed to it,—that, when convinced that God has been our maker, we are solicitous to inquire whether he be also our

preserver,—that, when accustomed to ascribe to his wisdom and goodness every physical event, by which temporal good is produced and temporal evil alleviated, we are irresistibly led to examine upon what grounds he is to be revered and obeyed as the future judge of our actions. Thus, while the profound and solid premises laid down in my text were generally received—while the long train of moral and religious considerations which result from them were inculcated in the elaborate writings of the learned, and, to every practical purpose, sufficiently understood by the unlearned—while men were disposed to measure their proper and supreme good, not by precarious and exclusive calculation of temporal utility, but by their possible capacities of enjoyment in some future stage of existence, adapted to their different degrees of merit under all actual circumstances, whether in a state of unassisted nature, or in a state of special redemption—while their conscious dependance upon a Deity induced them to look upon his approbation as the only intelligible and effectual ground for expecting happiness upon the whole—while the deeds of which he would approve were supposed to be of indispensible and unalterable obligation—while accountableness of men made them anxious to discover the real will of that Being to whom they were to account, as well from the dictates of uncorrupted natural as the authority of revealed religion—while their rewardableness was allowed to belong to actions, or events generated by actions, performed, you will observe, in direct and voluntary conformity to the commands,

and with an immediate regard to the favour of God—while virtue was thought to derive its best rules and best encouragements from religion, and therefore was to be practised more from a sense of duty and ultimate advantage than from custom, or from propriety, or from arbitrary institutions, or from respect to reputation in society, or from the mere speculative perception of its intrinsic beauty, or the mere experience of its tendency to promote our welfare only in this imperfect and transitory life—while, I say, these large, salutary, and most momentous principles were familiar to our memories and sacred to our feelings, the reformers, or, as I should rather call them, the corruptors of society, were sensible that their theories would excite suspicion rather than confidence, and contempt rather than admiration—that their real intentions would be detected under all the specious colours of their philosophical professions—that their sophistry and their rhetoric would be baffled by common sense, and their novelties rejected as bold and mischievous fallacies. They saw, as did the sacred writer, not only the clear congruity, but intimate union of the two positions contained in the close of my text. We must, therefore, acknowledge that they shewed their consistency and their dexterity, when they tried to put asunder what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had joined together, and meant after separation more easily to destroy—when they endeavoured to extinguish every hope of futurity—to undermine every ground of confidence in the Deity, as the rewarder of those who

seek him, and gradually to overthrow every popular persuasion, and every philosophical argument, that he even exists. Again and again I must entreat you to remember that, in the view of the writer from whom my text is taken, the being of a God, and his moral government, are treated, not only as related to each other, but as in reality dependant upon each other, and that to the right conception of that relation, and the rooted belief of that dependance, we are to look for such a disposition of the human heart, and such regulation of human agency, as shall be pleasing unto God. What, then, is thus generally and concisely asserted by the sacred writer, I shall continue my endeavours more particularly to unfold.

When you come to God, one part of your faith must be, that he *is*; and the other, that he is the rewarder of those who seek him. The second is obviously impossible without the first; but the first is possible, that is, involves no contradiction in the absence of the second. Here, then, from ideal possibility we must pass to intelligible fact.

Now, even in theory, the views we have of the Deity merely as a Creator soon become dim and confused, though our senses suggest to us irresistibly that this character belongs to him. We know that all substances, and all the properties by which they become discernible to us, owe their origin to his power. But as to the manner in which they were created, or in what other manner they might have been created, or what additions might have been made to their number and mutual rela-

tions, and what changes might have been introduced in their respective uses, we are utterly ignorant. Agency and intelligence we do perceive must have numerous and even essential differences in the Creator and ourselves. The previous existence of materials is necessary to the works of men, but not to those of God. For inexplicable as may be, in many respects, the action of a Being whose primary plans have no instruments to aid, no archetype to guide the execution of them, we are compelled to admit the fact; nor can we escape from such admission, but by the absurdity of rejecting a first cause itself uncaused, and of supposing that the events we see is a chain where the first link can never be found, and where every cause is the effect of a preceding cause, exerted through an indefinite series.

Again, human agents cannot will, nor design without motives and ideas suggested to them by preistent objects; but the Deity designed—he willed—he effected the existence of those very objects. In all human perceptions the mind is, in some sense of the word, passive, and forms its judgment upon materials presented to itself distinct from itself, and existing independently of itself; but we cannot suppose the Deity to receive impressions from the impulse of extraneous things, nor deny him the power of understanding before there was in existence any external thing to be understood. Very small, then, is the progress we can make in useful knowledge, very scanty must be our conceptions of the Deity, very languid would he our love of him, and our reverence towards him, if we only discerned that he

is, and that we have been formed by him. But the relation in which he stands to us, as the righteous governor of the world, is more open to our view, and more conducive to our improvement. For this relation is manifest from the constitution of things, as they lie within our ken, from the properties assigned to them, and the ends to which they are subservient; and here we contemplate God as a being who is always presiding over, and, as it were, acting upon, the natures which he has bestowed on his creatures; and this, too, according to rules which he has himself prescribed for them; and when, among those natures and those rules, we discover vestiges of a moral government, then our views of his attributes and his operations become more large, more precise, more interesting, and gradually conduct our thoughts to him as the rewarder of virtue.

If from speculation we turn to practice, the importance of the proposition contained in my text will be yet more apparent. Were it only known to us that God is, we should be ignorant of his will; we should see no connection between that will and our own well-being; we should be fearless of his displeasure; we should be indifferent to his favour; joyless in looking back upon the past, helpless for the present, hopeless and reckless of the future; sometimes in deep murmurs of complaint, and sometimes in a bolder tone of accusation, you might be tempted to say—why has God made me thus? Omnipotence he may have; but it leaves the whole human race a prey to worms in the dreary and silent regions of the grave. He may have omniscience also; but

this attribute has ordained no ultimate difference between the presumptuous scoffer who, without any reflection, thinks in his heart, and without any misgivings proclaims with his lips, there is no God, and the humble inquirer who wished to discover, and, having discovered, would have gladly adored a Deity, holy, just, and merciful—none between the ruthless oppressor and the guiltless victim of his caprice or his rage—none between him who, seeing his brethren have need, shuts up the bowels of his compassion from them, and him who provided for the sick and needy, delivered the fatherless and him that had no helper, and caused the widow's heart to sing for joy—none between the rich man, who is arrayed in purple, and fares sumptuously every day, and the poor man, who finds no shelter for his wearied head from the pelting storm, and who, unpitied and unseen, closes his miserable existence under the pressure of a broken spirit, or the pangs of acute disease, or the lingering torments of thirst and hunger. Impossible then it is, that, perceiving only the single relation of a creature to a creator, and that creature unprotected here, and unaccountable hereafter, we should strive to please, or wish even to contemplate him; it is impossible we should ever approach him in the Christian spirit of supplication to him as our preserver, or of humility as our judge. Lost we should be to all the lovely and refreshing sentiments of that gratitude which, even when exercised towards man, not only recognizes with delight past services, bu anticipates in imagination a future disposition to

serve, and which, as now directed to the Deity, ascribes to him both the power and the inclination to pour down upon us every good and perfect gift; to supply all the wants which as dependant creatures we must ever feel; to assuage our sorrows; to listen to our prayers, and to accept the well-meant tribute of sincere and ardent thanksgiving.

Hence, while we know him under one aspect, and one only, our virtues would lose much of their activity, and our vices would become more frequent and more incorrigible; the felicity, of which we are capable even in this life, would be diminished; the miseries of it would be multiplied and embittered; and, looking to a common end with the brutes that perish, we should be deprived of that peculiar excellence which seems intended for us even on this side of the grave, as reasonable and moral agents. Christianity then, by connecting the cause of social virtue with that of general piety—by carrying on our contemplation from the physical to the moral attributes of the Deity—by making his will the direct and proper rule of conduct to us—and by representing our future happiness as the appointed effect and covenanted reward of our present endeavours to please him, is a most illustrious instance of the divine wisdom and goodness, as they are displayed both in the precepts and the sanctions of our holy religion.

The Deity, it must be acknowledged, not with reluctance as disparaging to the honour of revealed religion, but with thankfulness as illustrating the real though limited usefulness of natural, did not

entirely leave himself without witness among the heathens. His eternal power and godhead might have been, and in some degree were, from the creation of the world, understood from the things that were made. Such is the language of Scripture, and such would be the conclusions of our own unassisted judgments in the operations of the human mind in certain circumstances. But we must by no means forget the infirmities as well as the capacities of our fellow-creatures—we must remember that while the bulk of mankind had changed, as St. Paul saith, the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—that while progressive idolatry facilitated progressive immorality, and many of those who worshipped the creature more than the Creator were given up unto vile affections, even several of those persons who were more eminently distinguished for the splendour of their talents, and the depth of their researches, became, as says the same Apostle, vain in their imaginations—that professing themselves wise, they became fools—that even when they knew God, they honoured him not as God.

No enlightened Christian would be disposed to deprecate with wanton contempt, or from false humility, the powers of reason, because he must consider those powers as the gracious gift of God himself—as the distinguishing characteristic of our own nature; and the necessary instruments both of our intellectual and spiritual improvement. But in estimating their extent and their effects, he must be guided by the testimony of ancient his-

tory and the dogmas of ancient philosophy, and from that history and those dogmas he will learn that many celebrated heathens who acknowledged God to be, yet doubted or denied a position far more interesting to human virtue and human happiness—that he is also a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Even in the truths which relate to the existence of a Deity, the light, which revelation holds forth to us, is more pure and more steady than that which guided many teachers, who are justly considered as the ornament of the heathen world. It does not darken the subject by mystical traditions, nor by disputable abstractions, nor by the use of those uncouth metaphysical terms, which in the vain attempt to procure unusual precision eventually produced ambiguity. The Epicureans, it is well known, while they allowed the being of many gods, derided the belief of futurity, combatted all the obligations to virtue arising from our accountableness, and therefore are justly represented by Cicero, as teachers, who took away in reality what they admitted in appearance; and, while they declaimed against superstition, were in effect the enemies of all religion whatsoever. According to their hypothesis there is a God, but not such a God as we adore—not a rewarder of the good—not a punisher of the bad—unless we rush into the gross absurdity of saying, that God punishes and rewards himself, when the souls that were made out of him return into him, and lose all identity with the individuals who had acted well or ill, in a state of temporary separation from the divine substance.

But the superiority of the Christian doctrine will be yet more intelligible, if we were to compare it with the tenets of other sects, more favourable in general estimation, than those of Epicurus, to the cause of virtue. You read in the Scriptures, that God in the beginning created the world from nothing; but this doctrine does not appear to have been taught by any one Greek or Roman sage; it was opposed, I am sure, by many of them; nor can any trace of it be seen in the theological antiquities or the metaphysical subtleties of Eastern nations. Yet surely this truth gives us the most exalted notion of omnipotence; and by the exclusion of it many of the most pertinent arguments, which a Christian would adduce for the existence of God, would be weakened. Plato held indeed the existence of God; he often speaks in glowing terms of the divine attributes; he sometimes rises into eloquent representations of of a future state; but he avowedly maintained the eternity of matter, and therefore invalidated many of the proofs which a purer and more enlarged theism suggests to our minds. The later followers of this illustrious man, as we learn from Plutarch, spoke of the soul itself, not so much as the work and production of God, as a part of him—not as made by him, but from him and out of him; and thus, while they seem to assign the soul a share of the divine perfection, and talk of its having the same substance with God, their opinions strongly resemble the impieties which Spinoza maintained in times comparatively modern.

The acute successor of Plato held, in common

with his master, the eternity of matter, from which all visible things were formed and endowed with forms. He held also the eternity of intelligence itself; and upon this very circumstance he would establish a doctrine which tends to prove that God is not the rewarder of those who diligently seek him; for the souls of men are among those things which he represents as in a continual flux, and which after death would be resorbed into the eternal mind, and therefore could not be capable of reward or punishment,—because consciousness, though it does not constitute personal identity, is the necessary and sole indication of it, and though it be only the property or power of the being, is such a power that, in the absence of it, every being, who is a moral agent, must cease to be the object of distributive justice.

A consequence not very dissimilar flowed from the system of the Stoics, who, it must be owned, among all their strange paradoxes, and all their fierce contentions among themselves, speak in terms most reverential of the Deity. They inculcated many noble lessons of the more difficult virtues, and they sincerely, though not perhaps very consistently, recommended that worship which in the Epistle to the Hebrews is called "coming to God;" and upon which the Stagyrite, through the whole extent of his numerous writings, is studiously silent. But by the notions which they entertained about the refusion of the human soul into the soul of the world, and about the general conflagration; about the successive revolutions of events and existence at stated periods;

they left no room for the expectation of futurity as a state of being in which individuals are to be rewarded or punished according to their works.

The fact is, that when the artificial and discordant tenets of Greek and Roman philosophers are accurately examined, and the grounds and illustrations of their respective systems are pursued to their legitimate consequences, they will always be found inferior to the Christian doctrine of rewards and punishments, and many of them may be ultimately resolved into principles similar to those, which the followers of Epicurus avowed more openly, and defended perhaps more consistently. Undoubtedly, amidst the subtle controversies of sophists, and the refined conjectures or precarious assumptions of teachers, who deserve a less dishonourable name, the common sense of mankind still kept some hold upon their hopes and fears. It in some instances counteracted, though it could not entirely correct, superstition. It produced the belief of gods as rewarders, according to the various forms of popular theology.

But the corruptions of that theology are notorious; and, whether you consider it as admitting the existence of one deity or more, or as representing him under the character of a judge who will recompense the righteous and punish the wicked, the hardiest infidel would blush to assent, that in point of perspicuity, simplicity, consistency, and useful tendencies, it will for a moment stand the test of comparison with the doctrines which revelation sets before us, upon these and other most aweful and sublime subjects. Hear then the voice of wisdom, as in

Holy Writ she crieth aloud for your comfort and admonition. Have you not been told that the Lord our God is one God? have you not understood from the beginning that it is He who sitteth on the circle of the earth—He, who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain—He, who set in them a tabernacle to declare his glory—He, who ordained the moon and the stars in the firmament, which sheweth his handy work—to whom will ye liken me? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold Him who hath created these things; who, by the greatness of his might, bringeth out their host by number, and calleth them all by their names. Remember, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faileth not, neither is weary, nor is there any searching of his understanding. The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea; it is high as heaven—what canst thou do? it is deeper than the grave—what canst thou know? Ask the beasts of the field—they shall teach thee; speak to the fowls of the air and the fishes of the sea, and they shall declare unto thee, that the Lord hath wrought this—He, who measureth the waters in the hollow of his hand—He, who weigheth the mountains in a scale, and the hills in a balance. He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them. He giveth the former and the latter rain and fruitful seasons; and by his commands the clouds drop down the dew. To him come the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow, and are satisfied. His eyes are upon the righteous, his ears are open to their prayers; he keepeth them

secretly in a pavilion from the pride of men and the strife of tongues; he maketh the perfect man, and the end of that man is peace. He so loved the world as to send his only begotten Son, that we might live through him. This is his commandment—that he who loves God loves his brother also. This is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Do you ask what? I answer, the precious and peerless lessons of wisdom, just now delivered to you. They are, you will remember, not drawn from any storehouse of human eloquence; but immediately and unmixedly from the sacred oracles of God. Now, according to the general and serious opinions of all believers, there is appointed a day when Christ will descend with the sound of a trump, and amidst the shouts of angels and archangels—a day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be exposed—when every thought, word, and deed, of every human creature shall be brought before a righteous and unerring tribunal—when the wicked shall be sentenced to dreadful torments, and the virtuous exalted to a state of everlasting bliss.

But even if we were to grant hypothetically that these magnificent descriptions are not to be understood literally, that felicity is not to be bestowed with the ceremonies of public trial, and in the simple *form* of recompence, nor misery inflicted in the mere form of punishment, but that felicity will be adapted and proportioned exactly to the merits, and misery to the deserts, of mankind; and that this

adaptation and proportion will be effected by a series of natural causes, which God himself has appointed for moral purposes; still the difference between the Christian and the philosopher is little more than circumstantial—still virtue will have, as, according to our clear and unalterable conceptions of fitness, it ought to have, the advantage over vice—still God is the author of unmixed and unceasing happiness to those who seek to please him—still all the intelligible, and nearly all the credible, ends of divine justice will be substantially answered, and all our conceptions of divine wisdom and mercy, as co-operating with justice, will be verified—still good and evil are set before us, and still our future well-being must depend on our present choice.

Let us then hold fast the Christian faith without wavering; let us acknowledge the weighty obligations we have to the Gospel, for the clear, connected, and comprehensive views which it exhibits of the Deity, as our maker, preserver, and judge. Let us remember with gratitude, that even the humblest believer may now obtain fuller and more satisfactory knowledge than many of the wisest heathens were able to acquire upon these interesting topics. But let us, at the same time, recollect, that speculations, however sound in their principles, however exact in their process, and however important in their results, are insufficient to fill up the measure of our duty, if they terminate solely in our inward persuasion, or in outward profession, or in transient though ardent feeling, or in mere orthodoxy, be it real or imaginary. By the faith which the Author

of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and all the other Sacred Writers inculcate, you are to understand, not a confidence in the vast and haughty pretensions of dogmatism, nor in the blind dictates of prejudice, nor in the tumultuous reveries of fanaticism, but a distinct and steady conviction of your reason. And on such a conviction alone, accompanied by works, all the rewards mentioned in the chapter of the text were bestowed. Faith, as I before told you, was an active, and therefore a meritorious principle in those patriarchs and other worthies, whose example the secred writer has described so luminously and recommended so earnestly. It was active, and therefore meritorious, in the Apostles, who sacrificed the comforts and conveniences of life, and who endured voluntarily stripes and chains, and the most aggravated torments of death in defence of the hallowed truths, committed to their charge. It was active, and therefore meritorious, in the first converts, who either shook off the incumbrances of Jewish ceremonies and traditions, for the sake of adhering to the weightier matters of the law, enforced by a crucified Redeemer, or who abandoned the corruptions of heathenism, polytheism, and licentiousness, and, encouraged by their Christian teachers, were anxious to make the utmost proficiency in temperance, righteousness, and all other preparatory qualifications for a judgment to come. Meritorious it will be also in yourselves, if to a rational, habitual, and devout spirit of faith, you add the firmness inspired by well-grounded hope, and all the amiable graces of Christian charity — if you bring every proud

thought, every unruly appetite, every unsocial affection, and every criminal habit, into captivity to the obedience due to Christ—if, at all times and in all respects, you employ all your powers to walk worthily of the high name by which you are called, and to adorn by your lives, as well as to magnify by your praises, that doctrine which has been delivered to us in the Gospel of your Saviour, and through him, for the sake of mankind, graciously revealed by your Father and your God.

SERMON XV.*

ON AVOIDING THE APPEARANCE OF EVIL.

1 THESS. v. 22, 23.

Abstain from all appearance of evil, and the very God of all peace sanctify you wholly.

WITHOUT adopting indiscriminately the opinions of some philosophers, who resolve all the fundamental principles of virtue into the doctrine of sympathy, and who apply their favourite system to the most familiar as well as the most arduous offices of morality, we are led by experience, as well as instructed by religion, to keep steadily in view the judgment that is passed upon our actions by our fellow-creatures. Various, no doubt, are the means, which our Creator has employed for preserving us from wrong, and encouraging us to right. In respect to ourselves, he has united the impulses of our feelings, the researches of our reason, and the guidance of our conscience. In reference to others, he has given additional vigour to our exertions by inspiring us

* June 1815.

with the love of reputation and the dread of infamy. In the breasts of other men he has created a tribunal, the decisions of which anticipate, and in some degree resemble the sentence, that will be passed on all moral agents at the last day; and as that sentence is founded upon a common, and most active sense of moral rectitude, there is a visible propriety in making it the object of serious and stedfast attention. Doubtless it is not always possible for us to penetrate the secret and complex motives of human actions, or to determine accurately the value of those circumstances, which in particular cases enhance merit or extenuate guilt. Hence arises a necessity of general rules for deciding upon the character of mankind, for connecting appearances with realities, and for inferring the merits and demerits of moral agents from the external marks, which are stamped upon their conduct. This principle is acknowledged by our Lord himself, when he refers to the outward action of men as evidences of their inward propensities. For, having stated that "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit," he lays down this plain rule—that "by their fruits we shall know them."

Much of the beauty, and much of the utility, which belong to virtue depend upon the aspect which it bears in the estimation of mankind, and upon the influence by which it operates as an example to terrify the vicious and to encourage the well disposed. It may therefore be considered as a proof not only of a misguided understanding, but of a perverse and callous spirit to throw off all regard

to the interpretation which other men are accustomed to put upon our behaviour. Dangerous, indeed, is that presumption, which induces us to set at defiance the disapprobation of the wise and good; and when it is considered that in the absence of personal temptation and personal interests, men less wise and less good are usually governed by general notions of duty, and a natural love of rectitude, the esteem even of such persons is not to be slighted: for, whatsoever allowances they may make to themselves for their own misconduct, they quickly take alarm at the faults of their fellow creatures, and decide with impartiality, and sometimes with severity against those sins, to which they are not themselves peculiarly addicted. They welcome every instance of that virtue which they are accustomed to practise. In higher points of morality they admire what they would be unable to imitate, and in matters less important, the consciousness of their own powers, it may be their own habits, produces immediate and sincere disapprobation of deliberate and frequent deviations from acknowledged duty. Thus we see the connection between virtue and religion, between that which is approved by man, and that which will hereafter be rewarded by the deity.

Now in the chapter preceding that, from which my text is taken, the Apostle most earnestly and most eloquently expatiates upon a life to come, upon the solemn judgment that was prepared for all mankind, upon the resurrection of Christ as a proof of our own resurrection, and upon his descent from heaven with the voice of an archangel, and with the

trump of God. Having recommended these grand events to their meditation, he reminds his Thessalonian converts that "they are the children of light"—he instructs them to watch, and to be sober—he inculcates many momentous duties, the performance of which was necessary to prepare them for meeting their righteous Judge. Among other precepts connected, you will observe, with the expectation of those awful scenes, which he had been describing, he exhorts them "to abstain from all appearance of evil"—he gives new force to the exhortation by connecting with it a long and interesting series of religious instructions, and by following it up with an ardent supplication that "the God of Peace might sanctify them wholly." It was not enough for the Thessalonians that "they prayed without ceasing"—that they quenched not the Spirit—that they despised not prophecyings—that they proved all things—that they held fast that which is good. In order to fill up the measure of their Christian perfection, it was incumbent on them to abstain from all appearance of evil, and when such abstinence was added to the other Christian graces which the Apostle had enumerated, they might consider themselves as wholly sanctified.

These precautions were the more necessary from the circumstances in which the first converts to Christianity were placed, while they were exposed to the captious malignity of the Jews, and to the supercilious contempt of the Gentiles. We know from scriptural and ecclesiastical history that every tenet, every action, every word, and every look of

Christians was an object of jealousy. Not only their virtues were overlooked or depreciated, but their faults were severely watched and maliciously exaggerated. If they refused to cast incense upon the altars of false deities, they were persecuted as enemies to the popular religion. If from motives of fear, and perhaps necessity, they assembled to worship in private houses, they were accused of dangerous conspiracies against the state. If they took bread and drank wine to commemorate the death of their crucified Redeemer, they were charged with sacrificing impure animals, and sometimes even with shedding the blood of human creatures for an offering to their deity. In this perilous situation they were at all times and in all places to be on their guard against false accusers—to shew by their attention even to the minutest points of duty, that in every part of their lives they acted under a sincere and serious responsibility to their heavenly Judge, and were anxious before heaven and earth "to adorn the doctrine of God, their Saviour, in all things."

In the correct and comprehensive view which Christianity exhibits of our moral faculties, our moral obligations, and the effects of them on our happiness, the agency of the Deity in this world, as well as the plan of retribution which he will accomplish in the world to come, are uniformly presented to the contemplation of believers, and as no action escapes his notice, or is unconnected with his schemes for the improvement and spiritual welfare of his creatures, it becomes a part of our duty

to shun every approach to evil, lest we be plunged farther and farther into guilt, and every appearance of it, lest we should disgust the righteous, corrupt the unwary, and harden the wicked. The philosophers of antiquity, whether they recommend virtue as the *utile* or as the *honestum*, have with very few exceptions insisted upon the *decens*, and thus far their moral lessons coincide with the precept laid down to us in the text.

But the instructions of ancient sages upon decorum were imperfect, because they turned the attention of their hearers to the approbation of man rather than of God, and they were often inefficacious, because they confined the salutary effects of virtue to temporal advantages instead of pointing out that glorious recompence, which the moral Governor of the Universe has reserved for it in the future dispensations of his justice, mercy, and holiness. Hence in those parts of our conduct which fall within the view of our fellow-creatures, the encouragements to virtue in the heathen world were often feeble, and many restraints from vice were wanting under circumstances where the offender expected secrecy, and therefore impunity. In our better deeds, performed with difficulty, there was danger that the love of human praise should degenerate into vanity and ostentation, and in the ordinary affairs of life, the dread of human reproach would often be insufficient to set men upon their guard against "the appearance of evil."

Justly then do we consider it as the great and

characteristic excellence of our holy religion, that the authority of it extends to all the possible conditions in which we are placed as moral creatures, and to all points of our duty under all circumstances, to the easy and arduous, to the common and the rare, to the open and the secret. A pre-eminence no doubt is repeatedly and deservedly assigned to the judgment of God, and at the same time provision is made for such a regulation of our conduct, as shall procure for us the serious and well-founded praise of our fellow-creatures. The former is to be the predominant and ruling principle of our actions. But we are not at liberty to slight the latter, and the reason for such caution most obviously is, that men, from the moral constitution of their nature, are led to approve of those actions which God has commanded and will recompense, as well as to disapprove of those which God has forbidden and will punish. The influence of human opinion is recognised in the very limitations which are set to its authority. Because God always *can* see, and man cannot, the very secrets of the soul, Christianity has more especially insisted upon purity and singleness of heart. On the other hand, because the judgment of God is in all cases unerring and perfectly righteous, and that of man may in many cases be imperfect, rash, partial, and unjust, we are commanded to prefer the praise of God to that of man, and to be satisfied with the testimony of our own conscience, when we obey our Maker at the hazard of offending our misguided fellow-crea-

tures. But when this great end is secured, an attention to our external deportment succeeds next in order. It becomes a matter, not merely of decorum and discretion, but of direct obligation. It is not only recommended to us by reason, but imposed upon us by religion, and the very same authority which commands us "to purify our hearts in the sight of God," calls upon us so to demean ourselves, as not to provoke the just contempt or hatred of our fellow-creatures.

In the fourth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle, after directing the Thessalonians to possess their own body in sanctification, and not to go beyond and defraud their brethren, because God is the avenger of all such sinners, he advises them to walk honestly, εὐσχημόνως, or, as the word may be more properly rendered, "decently," or with good habits, to them that are without, that is to be intent upon preserving such a behaviour, as may secure the esteem of those who behold it, even among the heathens.

In the chapter of my text we are exhorted to abstain from "all appearance of evil," that "our whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here, then, the same innocence, which protects us from the censure of the world, will avert also the displeasure of God, and the peculiar force of the Apostles' language has been well illustrated by a learned interpreter, who shews that the word ὁλόκληρον, "whole," employed by St. Paul, and which primarily signifies "the whole of a thing given by lot," is

metaphorically applied to a city, whose buildings are all standing, to an empire which hath all its provinces, and to an army whose troops are undiminished by any accident or calamity. It is plain, therefore, that the obedience required from Christians must be universal—that no distinctions of greater or less will justify us in evading any commands, or any prohibition—that the very "appearance of evil," voluntarily hazarded, is contrary to the purity and the dignity of the Christian character, and that no action can be blameless in the sight of God, which gives just offence to the moral sentiments of his creatures.

It was not piety itself, but hollow and hypocritical pretence to superior sanctity—it was not a well directed regard to the applause of men, but the attempt to obtain it by appearances unaccompanied with realities—it was not the mere reference of actions to human opinion, but the deliberate and secret disregard of God's approbation, which our blessed Redeemer condemned in the Pharisees—"He knew *what* was in men"—he knew what were the right, as well as mistaken judgments, which they are capable of making, and therefore he directed his followers "so to let their light shine before men, that, seeing their good works, they might be induced to glorify their Father, who is in Heaven." — Upon the same principle the great Apostle of the Gentiles exhorts them "to provide things honest in sight of all men" — to think upon those things, which are of good report, and

so to mingle good sense with good intention, that their good deeds might not be evil spoken of. For by these means the religion which they professed could not fail to recommend itself to the notice and approbation of all impartial observers, and the professors of it would have the merit of improving by example the converts, whom they had previously convinced by arguments, and persuaded by precept. The ground of these apostolical injunctions may be traced in the disposition of mankind to judge of their fellow-creatures, and in the possibility of their making an incorrect as well as a correct judgement—in their love of virtue, and the necessity of presenting it to their view clearly and distinctly—in their hatred of vice, and the propriety of separating all our actions from those visible circumstances which resemble it. The consequences of a good name are indeed beneficial to ourselves, and while they aid the general interests of virtue, they fall in with the righteous and benevolent purposes, for which the light of Christianity was given to the world.

It was the opinion of a celebrated heathen philosopher,* that the fair form of virtue to be admired need only to be seen, and as that admiration could not fail to produce corresponding efforts of imitation in the beholder, a good man increased the value of his good deeds by promoting the improvement of his fellow-creatures. On the other hand the im-

* Plato.

pure nature of vice, when stripped of all disguise, excites detestation and scorn, and the vicious are exposed to heavier condemnation by the tendency of their sins to decoy the unwary into criminal imitation. It marks indeed some defect in the love and reverence we bear to virtue, if from negligence or affectation we permit any parts of it to assume the exterior properties of vice. He, therefore, who wishes to promote the glory of God, to encourage a due reverence for his authority, and to engage mankind in a strict and constant obedience to his laws, will be anxious to avert all erroneous constructions upon his own behaviour. He will take care that his devotion is not mistaken for hypocrisy—his beneficence mistaken for ostentation—his temperance mistaken for churlish austerity—his zeal in the defence of religion mistaken for intolerance—his firmness in the support of truth mistaken for bigotry—his participation in harmless and unforbidden pleasures mistaken for levity or profligacy. Knowing the general inclinations of mankind to commend virtue, and to censure vice, he will endeavour to direct the better parts of their nature to their proper objects. Perceiving and lamenting too their infirmities, their passions, and their proneness to detect and exaggerate the indiscretions and feelings of their fellow-creatures, he will endeavour so to practise virtue, that it may neither be misapprehended by the thoughtless, nor depreciated by the censorious, and so to avoid vice that neither the inconsiderate nor the malevolent may find opportunities for im-

puting the guilt of it undeservedly, nor the wicked take occasion to plead the authority of supposed example in the extenuation of their own voluntary and habitual depravity.

In truth, the rapid progress of uncultivated or ill-regulated minds from bad to worse, when they meet, or fancy themselves to meet, with the slightest encouragement, the general eagerness to catch at every pretext which may assist them in aggravating the faults of others, and in palliating their want of ability, or perhaps their want of inclination, to distinguish between failings and sins, their proneness to consider vice as more venial, and virtue as more amiable, according to the greater or less responsibility of the persons whose practice they are disposed to imitate—their impatience to mitigate the pangs of conscious inferiority by bringing down to a level with themselves those who seem to be raised above them by intellectual or moral excellence—their credulity and their rashness, their ignorance and their malignity, their envy and their pride, their hypocrisy and even their sincerity, their wantonness in profligacy, and their sensibility from piety, all these various and sometimes opposite propensities of our nature, and qualities of our actions, evince the importance of that caution which the Apostle recommends.

The duties inculcated by religion, though universally obligatory, may, from particular circumstances, become more important and more indispensable. Some of those circumstances are to be

found in differences of sex, in our civil and ecclesiastical employments, and in our domestic relations. Such too is the importance of the particulars just now enumerated, that I shall conclude this discourse with some remarks upon each of them.

The progress of mankind in civilization places females in a condition where their excellences and defects are marked with increased vigilance. From them, under the endearing characters of parents, wives, and daughters, a peculiar degree of caution and delicacy is required. Amidst the snares by which they are surrounded, it is necessary for their safety that the first approaches to evil should be shunned anxiously and incessantly—that they should exercise a strong control over every irregular passion—that they should lay the foundation of all other virtues in unfeigned modesty and unspotted innocence—and that in every word and every gesture they should manifest their inward love of all those duties, by the practice of which they secure the confidence of husbands, the reverence of children, the affection of parents, and the general esteem of civilized and enlightened society. By the wise constitution of human nature, as virtue in them is more graceful and more lovely, so vice is more loathsome; and what, I beseech you, is the expectation which general experience allows them to form on the lot which awaits them, if, having no respect to the opinions of others, and no control over their own thoughts and words, they venture to slight the danger of appearances? After sustaining well the

characters of a daughter, or a neighbour, or a friend, they for one known fault are prejudged on the presumed guilt of many unknown, and, as it were with a common signal, are pursued by the frowns of every companion, every stranger, and every foe. After yielding to the impulses of sudden passion, the blandishments of insidious flattery, or the importunities of reiterated solicitation, they are consigned to infamy by the envy of the neglected beauty, the craftiness of the secret sinner, the indignation of the sober matron, and the apathy, or the scorn, or the selfishness of the ungrateful betrayer. After incurring the serious, and sometimes, I fear, too unrelenting censures of the world, they descend by rapid strides from pitiable weakness to unblushing and even incorrigible wickedness. After smarting from the inefficacy of their endeavours to obtain credit for the capacity and even the wish to be reformed, they are compelled to look for refuge in the hardihood of defiance, and the phrenzy of despair. Such are the frequent, and such the fatal consequences of neglecting that precept, which directs us to call in discretion and delicacy to the aid of principles, in avoiding the appearance of evil.

In regard to civil employments, the virtues of private life shed a brighter lustre upon the more arduous duties of public station. They keep in check the buffoonery of sciolists, the cavils of sophists, and the sarcasms of scoffers. They repress every seductive and impudent expectation of protection from congenial depravity, emboldened by power. They throw an additional air of authority

over the majesty of virtue—they conciliate envy, assuage fear, and sweeten obedience. On the other hand, it has been well remarked, even by a heathen moralist, that every vice of the mind draws after it blame, by so much the more conspicuous, as the offender himself is accounted greater*. The corruptions of a court, as we know from the history of our own, and indeed of many other countries, spread themselves widely through the inferior classes of society, and weaken both our natural and acquired antipathies to the deformity and the danger of sin. It has also been well remarked by a poet of antiquity, that the whole world is formed according to the example of a king, and that even liberty itself is more precious in the view of subjects, when it flourishes under the auspices of a sovereign, whose bosom glows with piety and virtue. Such, too, was the opinion of the wise man, in his encomiums upon the dignity and stability of that throne, which is founded in righteousness.

As to ecclesiastical employments, you, my brethren, will have a more distinct view of your own duties when you reflect upon the charge which has been committed to your spiritual instructors. You must have anticipated me in thinking, that the profession to which others as well as I belong, calls upon us to weigh seriously, and to perform diligently, the precept contained in my text. If to avoid the appearance of evil be at any time represented by our hearers among the smaller duties of

* Juvenal, Sat. viii. 140.

religion, and therefore such as may be neglected without danger to their salvation, we should remind them that the performance of those duties implies a rooted and unfeigned love of virtue, that they tend to keep our consciences alive to the authority of religion, that they facilitate our return to holiness after great and indisputable deviations from it, that they make up by the frequency of the recurrence what in individual cases may seem to be wanting in their importance, and that, from occasional combinations of circumstances, they sometimes carry with them the same unequivocal and strong marks of piety, benevolence, and self-command, which are usually ascribed to the greater and more sublime duties of a Christian. Such, doubtless, is the answer he should make to every objection and every evasion by which men endeavour to extenuate their own guilt, and to explain away the clear and peremptory commands of our common Redeemer.

But the efficacy of advice must always be increased by the known sincerity of the adviser, and that sincerity will be more fully evinced by the rectitude of his conduct than by the soundness of his arguments or the earnestness of his exhortations. The sacred trusts committed to our charge, the advantages we derive from education, the opportunities we have for illustrating the evidences and enforcing the duties of our holy religion, the frequent and serious calls which our professional engagements make upon us for contemplating and describing the awful solemnities of a judgment to

come, stamp a peculiar credit, not only upon our preaching, but upon our living, They draw towards us the fixed attention of the good, and the jealous suspicions of the bad. They make us in an eminent degree the patrons of every virtue, and the accomplices of every vice, according to the salutary or pernicious tendency of our personal example. They open a wider sphere for the influence of our talents, and our better actions, and they enhance the guilt of every wilful deviation from the very strictest rules of morality.

Slander itself, we should remember, is indebted for its success by appealing to some acknowledged standard of right and wrong; and upon this very account our respectability is much increased, and a stronger obligation lies upon us for taking heed that, in the lighter, as well as the weightier matters of the law, that in our familiar words as well as our more deliberate deeds, we conform to that standard, and thus put to silence the taunts of the ignorant and the calumnies of the scornful. Those instances of inattention and indiscretion, those deficiencies in the ordinary decorums of life, those levities in conversation, that fondness for amusement, that temporary absence of delicate sensibility and profound reverence upon every subject remotely and even incidentally connected with sacred things, which in the common mass of mankind may be almost venial, will in us be marked with keener vigilance, and followed up with heavier censures. That sense of duty, and that sense of propriety, which influence the moral judgments of mankind, will induce them

to require from us more activity in the exercise of virtue, more steadiness in the vindication of truth, more courage in resisting all the dangers of our spiritual warfare, greater exemptions from the corruptions of the world and the lusts of the flesh—a stricter guard against the infirmities of nature and the deceitfulness of the heart—a stouter command over the impulses of every passion and the domination of every appetite—a more fixed detestation of the reality, and a more wary abstinence from the appearance, of all evil—a more solicitous and unwearied application of all our intellectual faculties, all our moral habits, all our secret propensities, and all our open actions, to the great end of our being wholly sanctified by the God of Peace. Bounden we are more especially to reverence the decisions of the enlightened and the virtuous, to bear with the prejudices of the weak, to conciliate, if possible, the love and respect of the wicked, and to confirm every observer in every class of life, and with every variation of character, in the belief of our sincere wish to disseminate the truth, and to exemplify the rules of our religion.

Weighty at all times are the obligations which lie upon us to connect our own well-earned reputation with the happiness of our fellow creatures, with the glory of God, and with the efficacy of that religion which we profess to hold as the foundation of our hope, and the rule of our practice. But the age in which we live is distinguished by events which increase the necessity of vigilance and activity both in the discharge of our professional duties and in the

regulation of our personal conduct. We have witnessed the poisonous contagion of that irreligious spirit, which in these later days has spread so widely and raged so furiously—we have seen every art of seduction employed to warp the opinions of mankind upon the plainest and most wholesome duties of social life—we know that all the powers of a meretricious eloquence and a spurious philosophy have been expended in undermining the foundations of religion, both natural and revealed—we have been eye-witnesses of the fatal consequences, which a confederacy of pestilential deceivers has produced in disturbing the comforts of private and in destroying the securities of public life—we have observed the rapid progress of our deluded fellow-creatures from negligence about appearances to a shameless and systematic contempt of realities—from indifference about religion to the disbelief and disavowal of it—from the common feelings and common vices of mankind to a state of depravity, in which the whole spirit and soul and body were given up to the ravages of impiety and the dominion of sin. To theories so fallacious, to crimes so flagrant, the moral Governor of the Universe has no doubt appointed various restraints, which ultimately will produce their fullest and happiest effects. In the mean time it well becomes us to consider the share that belongs to ourselves in extricating our fellow-creatures from the perils which beset them.

Important in a peculiar degree are the considerations which ought to exercise the circumspection of our own order. Many of the doctrinal errors of the

Church of Rome, and many faults in its discipline among our forefathers, might have been forgiven or disregarded by the greater part of the laity, if at the æra of the Reformation the morals of the clergy had not been notoriously dissolute, and furnished a plea for rapacious men to seize upon the treasures, which seduced their possessors into riotous and shameless voluptuousness. Those errors have been corrected, and that discipline has been happily reformed in the Church of England. But if the teachers should ever be such as to give general alarm, and to rouse the indignation of wise and good men, the very excellence of our ecclesiastical constitution would rise up against us, and we should stand convicted of conducting ourselves inconsistently with a better system, and of having become wicked with fewer temptations to wickedness. They who oppose our opinions, and secretly entertain no favourable wishes to our order, may be kept under some restraint by the regularity of our morals. On the Continent, one of the ablest champions of the modern philosophy, when he is enumerating the effects of progressive science and diffused civilization, has with equal sagacity and candour observed, that they had given to society a decent class of clergy. Very bad men may employ as instruments for very bad purposes their impious tenets against religion itself, accompanied by vague and common-place declamations against what they call the craft and tyranny of the priesthood. But, if the accuser be silent on the neglect of temperance, honesty, charity, decorum, and professional duties among the teachers of Christianity,

their silence affords a strong presumption that suspicion however vigilant, and malignity however active, were unable to find any materials for just or even plausible accusation. Whatsoever then may have been the causes of the numerous and scandalous outrages, which desolated a neighbouring kingdom, we, as Christians, have abundant reason to rejoice that the advocates for infidelity brought no railing accusation against the purity or the decorum of their established clergy, and in a calmer order of things, under which, by the goodness of Providence, we are ordained to live, there is reason to hope that the same praiseworthy behaviour, which adorns the Church may, among other consequences, tend to preserve the best interests of the State.

But farther, as the precept to avoid the appearance of evil carries with it a direct reference to human opinion, it evidently follows that we cannot have too large or too correct a view of every local and every temporary circumstance by which that opinion, as turned towards our own behaviour, can be actuated. The various causes, let us remember, by which the peace of communities is disturbed, are now in a state of peculiar activity, and it is unnecessary for me to remind this audience that effects very pernicious arise from intellectual perversions, which at first sight are the most opposite.

A neighbouring country, as I have just now been observing, has been deeply injured by the licentiousness of infidelity. But much of the danger by which we seem to be surrounded, may be found in another quarter. It is possible for men to avoid

the appearance of evil without abstaining from the reality. It is possible for men to set such excessive and ostentatious value upon duties which are easily performed, as may induce a suspicion that they have entered into a kind of compromise with their conscience for the neglect of those weightier matters, which require frequent self-examination, painful self-denial, and self-command unwearied and inflexible. It is possible for men, while they preserve the strictest appearance of religion in external things to be destitute of that spirit, which can alone fulfil the gracious purposes of its author, and to inculcate opinions which have no warrant from the authority of his instructions, or the example of his life.

Fanaticism, the movements of which till within these few years were secret and desultory, is now advancing with rapid strides, and executing its purposes with all the regularity of system, and all the confidence of increasing success. Unfortunately it has a cause, which secretly and indirectly borrows aid from sects professedly hostile to the national Church; and yet more unfortunately, it has found too much countenance from those, who introduce into our pulpits not only unseasonable and unscriptural tenets, which our forefathers would have rejected, but contemptuous and acrimonious invectives against those persons who were ordained to the same office with their accusers, who worship at the same altar, who have, and, I am sure, are conscious of having the same awful responsibility to government and civilized society in this world, and to an

unerring Judge in a world to come. But it is impossible for us not to observe that even infidels have, in some instances, done to our morals that justice, which fanaticism withholds from us. It is impossible for us to forget that the self-appointed Reformers of our Church have declared their solemn assent to it, as a system which constitutes a pure and already reformed part of Christ's holy Catholic Church.

It were unworthy of us, as partakers in civilization, and as men peculiarly furnished with opportunities for the cultivation of our understandings, to inculcate doctrines which professedly and indiscriminately depreciate the best exercise of our reason, and which, upon this very account, are at once more flattering to the vanity, and more dangerous both to the faith and morals of the illiterate. Above all, it becomes us to recollect that the propagation of the tenets, to which I advert, is at variance with one part of my text, and seems to indicate a temper of mind not very friendly to the private or public quiet of communities, and therefore not very likely to proceed from the God of Peace.

To conclude: Upon our own duty, whether the observance of it be required by general principles, or by the particular signs of the times, no wise and honest teacher can have the smallest doubt. We rank moderation mingled with sincerity among the characteristic excellencies of our ecclesiastical establishment, and we consider ourselves as avoiding the appearance of evil, when we draw off the attention of our hearers from obscure and visionary interpre-

tations of holy writ, and endeavour to impress upon their reason and their conscience the observance of temperance and practical righteousness as duties strictly Christian, and as preparations indispensibly necessary for a judgment to come.

That precepts may have the aid of correspondent practice, it becomes us "to be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." It becomes us not only to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak, but ever to follow that which is good, both among ourselves and to all men—to abstain from all appearance of evil, and so to regulate our hearts and our lives, that by the influence of our example peace may succeed to confusion, and they who have been in danger of being seduced and corrupted by the artifices of men may in future be wholly sanctified, by the abundant and most efficacious grace of God.

SERMON XVI.*

ON CONSCIENCE.

MATTHEW xiv. 12.

At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, "This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

LAST autumn I delivered in this sanctuary a very instructive discourse on the power of conscience, as illustrated in the history of Herod, when he put John the Baptist to a violent death. I now and then intermingled some remarks of my own, but for the greater part of that discourse you are indebted to a contemporary writer, whose high reputation for science and erudition I have more than once noticed in your hearing. On the present occasion, and in other sermons which will follow this, I shall in my own words lay before you a series of remarks into which I was led by further meditation upon the same subject.

I mean, however, to take a wider range; I shall

* 1821.

endeavour to sound the depth of the human mind in the motives to action, whether the causes be near or remote; and I shall trace out the influence which events, whether slight or important in appearance, may have in generating or blending those motives, and in facilitating or obstructing the proper efficacy of conscience.

The history of Herod will hereafter be directly resumed, and minutely investigated, but the practical inferences to be drawn from it will to-day be supported by other statements, and other observations of a similar tendency.

As all these discourses are intended to display to you fully the power of conscience, it may not be amiss, at the opening, to elucidate the origin and the complex signification of a word so often introduced into the judgments which we form both of ourselves and of other men, as moral agents.

Conscience then means not merely knowledge, but *knowledge with*. It suggests, as it were, the notion of two parties, *the knower*, and *the known*; and accordingly, in the Latin language, but not in the English, it sometimes denotes the person, who perceives what is done by another man, as well as what is done by himself.

But in Latin generally, and in Greek and English uniformly, *conscience* has a reflex sense, and the operations of it seem, as I told you, to represent two parties, the agent and the observer, while in reality they are the same person. Yesterday I did a certain action, to-day I remember it, and the

remembrance of it is accompanied by a feeling of blame or approbation; and with a consciousness of identity, not according to any metaphysical subtleties, but in the more obvious, and, as it is called, *forensic* sense of the word—personal responsibility. The term, though familiar to our ears, is even philosophically proper, and it must have been introduced when man had more or less acquired a habit of looking into himself; when differences of right or wrong were more or less accurately observed; and when language had made some advance from simplicity to refinement, or from vagueness to precision.

The Hebrew language is very inartificial; and instead of supplying for *conscience* any appropriate or literal word, it furnishes us only with a metaphorical one, L E B, *the heart*, considered primarily, as the seat of all mental operations; in Hebrew therefore, we must sometimes understand it in the limited sense of *feeling*, which, in its figurative sense it always bears in our own tongue, as contrasted with the *head*, and sometimes for the *reasoning* faculty, as you may learn from many passages in the Proverbs of Solomon. In Latin,* as in Hebrew, the same word is occasionally used both for our feelings, and the exercise of our intellect. In

* Egregie cordatus homo Caius Æliu' sextus.—ENNIUS.
Non tu corpus eras sine pectore.—HORACE.
Oculis ea pectoris hausit.
OVID's Metam. on Pythagoras, Last Book.

English we have no such ambiguity. I have only to add, in the way of criticism, that the Syriac language designates conscience by a most significant appellation, *tara*, the derivative of a word which means to paint, to figure, to describe; so that conscience is thus represented to us as a faculty, which marks and engraves our actions upon the tablets of our minds. The characters in which it records those actions may, for a time, be dim, but seldom are they wholly effaced; and in proportion as we continue to turn away our eyes from those characters, the form which they one day or other may assume, will appear with increased bulk, and excite increased terror.

From this explanation of the words which denote conscience, let me turn your attention to the thing itself.

Experience, I doubt not, has pointed out to you the awful and salutary power of conscience, felt, as it must sometimes have been, with equal force, by the valiant hero, the contemplative sage, the peasant in his cottage, and the monarch on his throne.

Hence, the philosopher surveys with deep and serious satisfaction that constitution of human nature, which, amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life, is so well calculated to preserve us from immediate guilt, to lead us back to deserted virtue, to secure or recover our proper dignity in this world, and to rescue us from condemnation in the world to come. They, who unwisely slight, or presumptuously disobey the dictates of their faith-

ful monitor, never can find complete exemption from its just and secret reproaches; and of this fact, which I have already noticed, you will hear from me numerous examples. On the contrary, they who attend to its warning voice must, with gratitude and with reverence, acknowledge the wisdom and benevolence of the Deity, when he implanted in their bosoms such a guide to holiness and happiness amidst the various temptations by which human infirmity is assailed.

Concise, but luminous, is the language employed by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews—"We trust," says he, "we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly;" that is, praise-worthily. Here you see the ground upon which we are to trust for our attainment of this precious advantage; it is, that we "live praise-worthily"—that we live so *in all things*—that in all things we are earnestly and unfeignedly *desirous* so to live—or, in other words, that we thus unite the will with the affections, and advance from virtuous principles to virtuous habits.

Even in the heathen world, the power of conscience was discerned and confessed; and it well becomes us to remember, that three distinguished moralists have borne their testimony to the energy and the usefulness of this inward principle, which carries with it the vigilance of a guardian, the impartiality of a witness, the sternness of an accuser, and the authority of a judge. When Bias was asked what alone is a preservative against fear;—

when Periander was asked, where liberty worthy of a rational and moral agent was to be found;—when Socrates was asked, what is the source of real tranquillity, every one of them gave to the same important question the same explicit and decisive answer—a good conscience.

It is my prayer and my hope, that every man who hears me has, on some occasion or other, felt the pure and exquisite satisfaction which arises from an applauding conscience. But the history of Herod more immediately directs our thoughts to the causes of an evil conscience, and to that subject will the remainder of my present, and the whole of my future discourses be confined, for the purpose of showing you the diversified forms and degrees in which, having transgressed our duty, we are always in danger of being upbraided by our own hearts. The justness of this position no man will controvert, and the importance of it will be felt by every man who attends to the proofs which I intend, in my next discourse, to produce from writings both ancient and modern.

Now religion, either natural or revealed, is addressed to many, and among them, some may have their doubts upon the evidences and the rules of both, and to others, the view of them may, in some points, be imperfect and confused; perhaps too, the multiplied distinctions of Christian casuists have not been less pernicious to good morals than the plausible fallacies of heathen sophists. By vague and artificial rules, by multiplied exceptions, by shadowy discriminations, by intricate arrangements,

by circuitous deductions, by the arbitrary use, and the insidious abuse of technical terms, by swelling little things into great, and crumbling great things into little, by shifting from rhetoric to logic and from logic to rhetoric, by entwining scholastic jargon with scriptural phraseology, by confounding fictitious cases with real and real with fictitious, by distorting intelligible ethics into unintelligible metaphysics, and by misapplying similar principles to dissimilar times, causes, and circumstances, the misplaced ingenuity of casuists has obscured the subjects which they profess to elucidate, and it has provided a large stock of palliatives for vice, which the vicious have eagerly welcomed, and anxiously applied. But the wisdom of the Deity has not left us without such resources as the great bulk of mankind may find easily, and employ safely; he has implanted in the heart of every man some knowledge of his will; he has imparted to that knowledge the authority of law, and he has disposed the mind to ascend from the law itself to the Divine Lawgiver. As to human laws, they may be darkened by the interpretations of those who administer them; they may be seen dimly by those who are to obey them; but the law of God comes home at once to every man, and leaves him no doubts upon its wisdom, its justice, and its utility. Following abstruse speculations in the stillness of the closet, we may suffer our understandings to dwell upon the difficulties, which must accompany all researches into the moral government of God—we, as observers of the general system, may be led into

temporary or partial scepticism—we may explain away the force of obligation upon this or that part of our duty. Indulging our fondness for singularity, and gratifying our vanity by the habit of starting doubts, which we suppose to defy solution from ourselves and others, we may experience the worst effects of a predilection for paradox about sacred things, in a relaxed and unsettled state of the mind upon the importance of virtue. But the voice of nature will sometime or other be heard, as it was intended by the great Author of Nature that we should hear it; the subtleties of philosophy are put to flight by personal experience, when the betrayer of innocence, the plunderer of property, or the destroyer of life looks back upon his own conduct.

The consciousness of guilt seldom fails to be attended by more or less distinct apprehensions of punishment, near or remote, and hence have arisen some erroneous opinions upon the manner in which punishment is to be inflicted in the present world. A heathen poet tells us, that he would not venture to sail in the same vessel, or to sit under the same roof, with a wretch who had presumptuously revealed the hallowed secrets of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The Jews supposed that blindness, lameness, palsy, and other bodily infirmities, were the consequences of sin in the sufferer, or in his progenitors; and to these notions the language of our Lord is now and then accommodated. Christians speak of those signal misfortunes which befal men notoriously wicked, as the judgments of Heaven.

Correct and enlarged views of the moral world, and of the Christian religion would, indeed, assist us in discovering and correcting these errors; but the frequency with which they recur, and the deep impressions which they make upon our minds, decidedly prove the activity of conscience, in pointing out to us the guilt and the danger attendant upon the violation of the laws of God.

In tracing the operations of conscience, we meet with some remarkable circumstances. Self-delusion is favourable to insensibility; but insensibility may exist without self-delusion. Both, indeed, are fatal to innocence; and the proper remedy which nature has supplied for both is, *remorse*. It is therefore of high importance for me to clear up some difficulties, which recently have risen upon the subject from the subtleties of metaphysical disquisition. There probably is no human being, virtuous or vicious, who on some occasion or other, or in some degree or other, has not felt remorse. Whatsoever may be our speculative opinions upon liberty and necessity, and whatsoever may be the attempt of some men to alter the common course of human language, we have the feeling itself. It is a painful feeling. It may not come upon us immediately after the commission of a wrong action; but a thousand reasons, as I shall endeavour to prove in the course of my sermons upon the text, may occur to excite it.

It has not escaped my notice, that they who deny the feeling, and of course reject the term, as it is commonly understood, have not yet been fortunate enough to substitute any specific word for the com-

plex feeling which they allow to exist. They are content with telling us that remorse is a fallacious feeling, and they ground their assertion upon the principle of necessity. Every cause, independently of our will, must have its effect. Every prevailing motive is a cause, say they, over which the agent can have no control. In the same circumstances past and in the same circumstances future, there must be the same results, and as those results are unavoidable, the agent can have no reasonable ground for blaming himself when he has done that which, from the unalterable constitution of his mind, he could not but do. How then can there be any room for remorse? It proceeds, we may be told, from a fallacious feeling of freedom in our choice of action. But we are engaged in action, day after day. The external circumstances in which we are placed, are different. Our talents, our education, our natural dispositions, our acquired habits, are different; and yet, in every variety of climate, under different forms of government, under different discipline and tenets of religion, in different forms of society, in different classes of individuals living under the same form; our common experience, before we act, and after we have acted, is accompanied by a consciousness of volition; and such volition as leaves no room for us to charge our measures to the account of an irresistible necessity in cases, where our worldly interests, our reputation, our peace of mind, and our belief of responsibility in a future life, would induce us to welcome such a plea of self-acquittal.

Remorse always implies disapprobation. But is

not the disapprobation of other men always distinguishable from disapprobation of ourselves? Is not sympathy a part of our nature, and do we not desire to be approved by others when we are approved by ourselves? In what manner I ask then, does the feeling of remorse deceive us? Surely it does not make us impute to ourselves actions which we never performed. It does not make us confound actions, generally supposed to be right, with actions generally supposed to be wrong. It even compels us to separate them whensoever it exists. It does not obstruct or enfeeble our self-approbation when we do right. It puts forth its own energies then, and then only, when we conceive ourselves to have done wrong. Independently of the judgment which other men may pass upon us, it is always accompanied with inward self-abasement; and so far, it is intelligibly and uniformly the reverse of the feeling which we have, when we approve of ourselves. It implies sorrow, that we have acted thus and thus. It is generally attended by a near or a remote wish, that we had not so acted. To sorrow may be added fear, the fear, I mean, that the crime, now known only to ourselves, may by some chance be known to some other men: and when discovered, may expose us to their contempt or their displeasure. Is that contempt or that displeasure a fallacious feeling, when it is excited, as, in point of fact, it is alone excited, by objects which imply liberty in the agent? Do the phenomena at all justify us in supposing for a moment, that we should despise or hate any of our fellow-creatures, if we believe them

to act under an over-ruling and invincible necessity? If then the feelings of the observer be not fallacious, why should fallacy be imputed to the feeling of the agent? Such then is our condition as social beings, observing and observed; and in consequence of mutual observation, commended or blamed.

Some of the advocates for necessity allow our responsibility to God; and the consciousness of this responsibility points our fears to another object. We know that our actions are perceived by our moral Governor, and we are apprehensive of punishment from him sooner or later, in proportion to our guilt. Is the feeling, then, of remorse fallacious, and are we safe from punishment when we do not experience it? Shall it be called an useless feeling? Let us look to the fact in ourselves and in other men. Is the joy we feel in doing good no incentive to doing good again? Has the grief we feel for doing wrong no efficacy to restrain us from doing wrong again? And does not that grief, enter, as one ingredient into the complex feeling which we call *remorse?* It is an obvious, and it is an unalterable law of the human mind to seek for agreeable feelings, and to shrink from disagreeable. Remorse is one disagreeable feeling, and we are conscious, that in order to escape it, we must be on our guard against the actions which are the causes of it. In the eagerness of ingenious and ardent disputants to display the consequences of their own tenets, it has been rashly and erroneously said, that remorse is a feeling even pernicious. How can this

assertion be reconciled to experience? How can the painful feeling stimulate us to the action, which should subject us to it again and again, in direct opposition to those instincts, which upon all other occasions give the remembrance of pain a tendency to make us employ some effort for avoiding it? But further, we feel, and cannot but feel remorse, when the opportunity for better conduct has passed away. This very consideration increases and sharpens the remorse. The criminal who is doomed to expiate his offences by death, feels not only anguish for those offences, but an exacerbation of anguish, because the hour of amendment is gone by. If, indeed, he were innocent of the crime imputed to him, he might suffer sorrow and dread punishment; but his sorrow and his dread would, in some measure, be alleviated by the absence of remorse, as it implies self-condemnation—a feeling distinct from sorrow and fear, but almost universally conjoined with them.

Such is the imperfection of our nature, that remorse is necessary both to the good and to the bad. It is felt, and it must be felt by both of them. Neither of them is secretly ashamed of the feeling. Few of them can review their own lives without a firm conviction that, if they had not been stung with remorse, they would oftener have left undone what they ought to do, and would oftener have done what they ought not to do. Of such a feeling then, why are we to be told, that it is useless, and sometimes even pernicious? For my part, I know not any feeling the reality of which can be less doubted by that common sense, to which we may

safely all appeal from paradoxical assumption and ingenious sophistry; and by which, in despite of both, we practically approve and disapprove of ourselves and other men.

With great convenience to us in the prosecution of sound philosophy, some great writers have introduced the word, *self-complacency* as unmixed with inordinate self-love, and unbecoming self-conceit. Do the Necessarians, who speak contemptuously of self-condemnation, intend to go further, and to maintain, that the opposite feeling of self-complacency is fallacious, useless, or pernicious? Is this the language, or is this the sentiment of mankind, when we assist a friend, forgive an enemy, relieve the indigent, console the afflicted, resist strong temptations to gratify avarice or ambition, rescue at the hazard of our lives the ship-wrecked sailor from destruction, and cheer the drooping spirits of the widow and the orphan? I am aware, that the advocates of necessity are not unprovided with a term which, according to their system, sufficiently discriminates the man called *virtuous* from the man called *vicious*. They cannot consistently allow the virtuous man to be *meritorious*, but they speak of him as *fortunate*. Now, in the common course of human affairs, we rejoice with the fortunate who do rejoice, and we mourn with the unfortunate who mourn; but our joy and our mourning are very different from our approbation and our disapprobation of voluntary deeds. When a criminal is going to execution, the tender and amiable compassion of mankind leads them to say he is unfortunate; but our indignation

would rise up against the authority of laws, if there were not a concomitant, though latent, conviction, that his sufferings, which we, under particular circumstances, call misfortunes, were in reality the effects of misdeeds, which he ought to have avoided and did not. If in his dying moments he is observed to feel remorse, we are inclined to applaud as well as pity him; but if he be obdurate, pity gives way to unabated abhorrence.

Let us turn to the case of the virtuous man. On the performance of actions, which require great self-denial and great self-command, is he content to say of himself that he is only fortunate? Is he not sensible, that with the power, he had also the inclination to act meritoriously? He does not feel that he was forced so to act. He does feel that he intended so to act. His fellow-creatures see no traces of force. They do see many proofs of good intention; and is it then credible, that there should always be a fallacy in the repeated and uniform recurrence of these feelings, as experienced respectively by the observer and the agent?

Suppose that we were eye-witnesses to the deliverer of his country from a foreign or domestic oppressor, or to martyrs meekly laying down their lives for the sake of truth, and aspiring to a heavenly reward. If, concerning such men, we were to say only, they are *fortunate*, we should ascribe to chance or to some unknown cause those actions, which are visibly the result of design; and strangely must the man be deluded by philosophical pedantry, who should deliberately attempt to con-

found what all mankind in all ages have conceived to be distinct. Nature, as I just now remarked, has provided a proper feeling and a proper term for the fortunate and the virtuous. We rejoice with the former: we approve of the latter: that joy and that approbation carry with them two kinds of merit in ourselves. Our benevolence implies the absence of envy, makes us rejoice in the happiness of others, and often impels us to promote it. Antecedently to any effort or any wish, and independently of both, our love of virtue itself induces us to extend that love to good men, and to sympathise with them in their own approbation of their own good deeds. That remorse should be irreconcilable to the doctrine of necessity, is a circumstance which, in my judgment, forms a strong presumption against the truth of that doctrine. Remorse, as a reality, can be ascertained by a direct appeal to experience. Necessity is proved by a long and abstract chain of reasoning, the process of which is not very intelligible to the bulk of mankind, and upon which the premises have been examined and rejected by a great majority of the very greatest metaphysicians. Virtuous men, by a sort of instinct, startle at necessity; and vicious men would gladly persuade themselves that they have an excuse in it for their vices. But no man is alarmed on hearing that he is endowed with liberty; for he is told at the same time, that it is his interest as well as his duty not to abuse it.

Let me, however, expostulate a little with the Necessarian himself. If the question be put to

him on his own practice, will he venture to maintain unequivocally, that there is no difference in his reflections upon those actions, which by the common consent of mankind are praised or blamed—that for offences not very heinous, he has not smarted under what is called compunction and shame—that, hereafter, should he commit any atrocious crime, such as perjury, incest, or murder, he should expect to look back upon it with perfcet indifference—that, with equal indifference he should contemplate those actions which other men call meritorious—that in the former cases, where all other men would blame him, he should stand acquitted to himself, as a being merely *unfortunate*—that, in the opposite situation in which all men would praise him, he should appear to himself only *fortunate*—and that this similar feeling of indifference in situations most different, would arise from his reliance upon certain reasonings which taught him to believe that, under the circumstances in which he acted, according to his own views of necessity, he was compelled so to act, and was incapable of acting in any other manner from any other motive? He might tell us, as indeed we have been told, with a magnificent array of eloquence, of metaphysics, and I had almost added of specious piety;—yes, he might say, that the divine wisdom, which ordained the existence of a chain, binding the past to the present, the present to the future, and the future to eternity, willed the existence of every link of which that chain is composed. He might say, that in the link of iron

there is a Caligula, and in the link of gold there is a Marcus Aurelius. But the very contrast of these two characters implies, that he cannot even himself pronounce Caligula not bad, Aurelius not good—that he had no hatred of Caligula, though in the language of his own school, he was only unfortunate—that he had no love for Aurelius, though in the language of his own school, he was only fortunate.

Upon this, as upon many other questions, the fallacy of general propositions is most effectually developed by the application of them to particular cases. If a man, intending to support the credit of his sect, should put Caligula and Aurelius upon the same footing, we might be content to smile at him for singularity and affectation; but if we had reason to think that he was sincere, our smiles would be converted into frowns, and we should suspect that the errors of his head would sooner or later be allied with the corruptions of his heart. It has been intimated by men, whose belief in the existence of the Deity is somewhat problematical, that he who ordained the chain just now mentioned, is neither pleased with the golden link, nor displeased with the iron. This is not a place for me to enter into any discussion with those who doubt the existence of a God. My concern is with a better class of men, who not only admit his existence, but ascribe to him moral attributes—with men who admire his power and his wisdom in the *natural world*, and allow their joint operation with justice, holiness, and mercy in the *moral world*. I do not call upon them

to say that God is angry at the sight of the iron link, but I should entreat him to pause before he pronounces that God beholds that link with the same approbation with which he views the golden one—to pause before he declares, that the same Being, who had ordained the differences of both, would contemplate both as if they equally excluded from approbation and disapprobation. An omnipotent and at the same time a benevolent Being may, and in my opinion does, employ a physical evil as the instrument eventually of moral good. A righteous, and, at the same time, an omniscient Being, may permit moral evil to exist, if, upon the whole, it be instrumental to physical good, and, in many cases let me add, auxiliary to the production of moral good among creatures circumstanced as we are. But can a just and holy Being be supposed, through the whole system of our moral discipline, to substitute appearances for realities? Can he be supposed to have given us a fallacious, useless, pernicious feeling in that remorse, which to good and to bad men, if we can believe in their own representation of their own thoughts, is a powerful and even necessary restraint from wickedness? Can he be supposed to have implanted in us notions of virtue as leading to happiness, and vice as obstructing it, while he views both virtue and vice with perfect indifference? Can he be supposed to have deceived us, in ascribing our choice of virtue and vice to freedom; while, in reality, that choice was the result of inevitable necessity; and therefore upon any known principles of justice, or wis-

dom, or holiness, could neither entitle virtue to praise, or subject vice to blame?

When, from the general laws of the moral world, virtue is experimentally found to be, on the whole, favourable to happiness, and vice unfavourable to it, is it conceivable, that such a constitution of things was not intended on the part of God himself to encourage virtue and discourage vice? and if the tendency of remorse be to reclaim us from vice, and rescue us from the dreadful consequences of it, such a feeling makes an important property in the human mind, and ought not to be obscured and explained away by metaphysical subtleties. As to the links of which I was speaking, because other men have spoken of them—a good man might call the link of gold *happy;* he must wish to be that link. He will be thankful to Providence for not permitting him to be the iron link. But he would not describe his own happiness by saying, with the Necessarian, and the Fatalist, that he was *fortunate.* He would have an additional and a distinct perception of some other property which he, without arrogance, would call *meritorious;* and he at the same time would perceive, that a consciousness of merit was one ingredient of his happiness. The Necessarians, as I have sometimes observed, do not profess to make any distinction between omissions and commissions, which are against the common sentiments of mankind, and other omissions and commissions, the guilt of which arises from mistaken and superstitious notions about that which is pleasing or displeasing to the true God, or to false gods. We know,

that from human weakness, the neglect of religious ceremonies in the Christian, as well as the heathen world, will sometimes produce sharper remorse than the violation of a plain duty. Under these circumstances the judgment of men err. We perceive their error—we deplore it—and if any opportunity should occur, we should endeavour to rectify it. Yet, in following the dictates of their own conscience, imperfectly enlightened, they may err, and, I should add, they would sin, if they acted in the same manner amidst a clearer light to their judgment. Their guilt, however, would lie, not in the error of their understanding, as such, but in the concomitant and unresisted influence of those sensual, malevolent, and selfish affections, which unhappily were allied with error, and of which the criminal properties were disguised by false notions of duty. Those properties might indeed be discovered by reflection; and that discovery might break the force of previous habit, and separate them from the misconceptions with which they had co-operated. Men would then find that benevolence is better than sacrifice, and that the neglect of penance, fasting, and offerings of cummin-seed, is less unworthy of a Christian than the neglect of justice, piety, faithfulness, and other weightier matters of the law. These they would chiefly wish to do; and at the same time they would take care not to leave acts of external devotion undone. Conscience would soon have its proper sway over their reason, their affections, and their will, and the whole compass of their moral agency; and remorse would be felt in

proportion to the real sinfulness of their conduct. They would have no shelter under the plea of ignorance, and not being accustomed to metaphysical refinement, they would have no thought of looking for justification in philosophical necessity. But upon the delusions of conscience I shall speak more largely in one of my subsequent discourses. My present concern is with the reality and efficacy of remorse.

Doubtless, where superstition misleads our opinions upon the comparative merits and demerits of actions, we have to lament, not so much that men feel very sharp compunction in consequence of what they suppose to be criminal, as that they feel it very indistinctly and feebly, and in matters which men of more cultivated understandings uniformly and deservedly hold to be of superior importance. The absence of remorse may, now and then, be to them pernicious; but I contend, that the presence of remorse is not useless to them, because it implies a sincere desire of doing what is right; and this desire carries with it a strong presumption that, under more favourable circumstances, a quick, strong, habitual feeling of compunction would operate to the advantage of the agent, so as to rescue him from many idle scruples, and many superstitious extravagancies, to which he was formerly exposed, so as to guide him hereafter to very good actions—so as to restrain him from actions very bad. In that condition of imperfect knowledge, which the Deity has allotted to him, his mind is a law unto itself, and it were unreason-

able to contend, that his obedience to that law, when he knew not a better, is wholly destitute of merit, or wholly unworthy of commendation. Besides, what men will take upon themselves to say, that the same active influence of conscience which directed him where we think him mistaken, has not, in various instances, been a guide to him, in those points, upon which nearly all men are agreed. To-day, he is sorry for having neglected some observances of piety; and to-morrow, he will be more alive to compunction, for having transgressed the rules of honesty, temperance, and humanity.

Whatsoever be the acuteness of metaphysicians, it is quite impossible for them to disprove the actual power of conscience, and the visible usefulness of it, as inflicting upon moral agents the pain and the shame of remorse. If they had no consciousness of free agency, there could be no room for remorse, as the word is now understood; and as the *thing* by men, who are not engaged in abstract speculations, is now confessedly experienced. Upon such a supposition they, whom we call virtuous, and they whom we call vicious, would appear to others and to themselves quite undistinguished by any property, which should entitle the one to approbation, or subject the other to disapprobation. The advocates of necessity, to do them justice, are not insensible of these consequences, and they virtually admit them as flowing from the premises which they reject, to make room for their scheme of necessity.

I have dwelt the more largely on the subject of remorse, because a right view of it is inseparably

connected with our inquiries upon the force of conscience; and because I think that the inferences drawn from disputable and obscure metaphysics are at variance with the generally received notions of mankind, and are practically confuted too by their feelings, when they have been inattentive to the principles of virtue, or have been tempted to act in contradiction to them. Even amidst the errors, which now and then call remorse into action, a man would not be good if he slighted the scruples which he really felt. He might, indeed, be a better man, if by the removal of those scruples, he had a stronger sense of the obligation under which he lies to perform other and greater duties. But, under the guidance of those very scruples, he obeys the authority of conscience; and probably, he on many occasions, has had the sincerity and the fortitude to obey it in opposition to his unruly appetites, and with a partial or total sacrifice of his worldly interests.

In my next discourse I shall set before you some additional observations upon the properties of remorse; and I shall endeavour to illustrate them by a pertinent and interesting series of instances, which I have selected from writers both profane and sacred.

SERMON XVII.

MATTHEW xiv. 12.

At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, "This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him."

IN a former discourse I explained to you largely and minutely the import of the word *conscience*. I stated generally the agreement of mankind upon the importance of the thing itself; and in opposition to some metaphysical refinements which have gone abroad, I set before you the reality and the usefulness of that feeling, which is usually and properly called *remorse*. Upon the present occasion I shall bring forward, as I told you, some additional remarks upon the properties of remorse; and I shall illustrate them by a pertinent and interesting series of instances, which I have selected from writers both profane and sacred.

Let me begin the subject with passages from persons to whom the light of the Gospel was unknown, and who were guided by those principles, which cultivated reason and natural religion suggested to them.

Hear then the words of one who was no less distinguished as a profound philosopher than as an

eloquent orator. "If any wicked persons," says he, "seem to themselves sufficiently fenced and guarded against the danger of having their crimes known by other men, they yet dread the power of the gods, and they believe that the anxieties which prey upon their minds, whole nights and whole days, are sent by the immortal gods for the purpose of punishment." *

Happen, says a sage of the stoical school, it *may* to a wicked man to be concealed, but reliance on the *continuance* of concealment cannot happen to him. Thus stands the fact. Crimes may be safe from the arrival of actual evil, but secure from the dread of evil they cannot be. And why? Because conscience convicts them of guilt, and shews them to themselves. It is the peculiar and unalterable lot of the wicked to tremble.† The statement of this illustrious moralist deserves to be expanded. Chance, by which is meant an incalculable, inexplicable uncontrolable series of events, may save a wicked man from the scourge of punishment and the howl of infamy; but no chance, however favourable; no precaution, however circumspect; no exertion,

* Quod si qui satis sibi contra hominum conscientiam septi esse, et muniti videntur, deorum tamen numina horrent, easque ipsas solicitudines, quibus eorum animi nocteis atque dies exeduntur, a diis immortalibus supplicii causa importari putant. Cic. de finibus, lib. i. parag. 16.

† Potest nocenti contingere ut lateat, latendi fides non potest;
Ita est, tuta scelera esse possunt, secura non possunt.
Ideo nunquam fides latendi fit etiam latentibus: quia coarguit illos conscientia, et ipsos sibi ostendit. Proprium autem est nocentium trepidare.—Senecæ Epistola 97.

however intense, can preserve him from the dark presages, the excruciating corrosions, the debilitating and bewildering depressions of dismay.

Among the adages the origin of which can be traced to no celebrated individual, and the truth of which is instaneously admitted by all men in a state of society, one has been preserved by a pre-eminent judge in the beauties of composition, the principles of ethics, and the occurrences of common life. "Conscientia," says Quinctilian, "mille testes," and the reason is obvious. Amidst a thousand witnesses, some may be rash, some may be prejudiced, some may be at variance with each other. But how stands the testimony of conscience, as contrasted with the testimony of a thousand witnesses? As to rashness, we have the opposite feeling of reluctance to suffer the pains of reproach from conscience. As to prejudice, the bearings of the mind lie the other way; for the prejudice is always in favour of ourselves, and leads us to extenuate, so far as we can, our own misdoings. As to variance, our hearts seldom fail to tell us the same uniform tale; and if, in some particulars, there should be defects in memory, the intenseness of our feeling is amply sufficient to make us acquainted with our guilt, while we attend, as we sometimes must, to the voice of conscience. Never does it reproach us with that which we have not done; and though one train of circumstances may, for a season, make us insensible to what we have done, there is usually in reserve another train of circumstances, which, with our will, or against it, sets before us the plain truth.

Glowing is the description which a celebrated

poet of antiquity has given us of a wretch smarting under the load of his sins:

At night, should care permit the wretch to doze,
And his toss'd limbs enjoy a short repose,
Sudden, the violated fane appears;
And you, chief phantom of his nightly fears—
Your frowns terrific, and reproachful eyes,
Your shadowy form of more than mortal size,
Make the big drops from all his body start,
And wring confession from his lab'ring heart.
These are the souls, who shrink with pale affright
When harmless light'nings purge the sultry night;
Who faint, when hollow rumblings from afar,
Foretel the wrath of elemental war;
Nor deem it chance nor wind that caus'd the din,
But Jove himself in arms to punish sin.
That bolt was innocent—that storm is pass'd,
More loud, more fatal, each succeeding blast—
Deceitful calms but nurse combustion dire,
And tranquil skies are fraught with embryo fire.
Should rank disease invade yon panting crew,
Should fev'rish pleurisy their lungs subdue—
'Tis plain, the hostile gods inflict the blow,
These are their jav'lins, these the stones they throw;
Nor dares the sinner in that trying hour
Devote due victims to his guardian power:
In vain for him the bleating lamb would fall,
Nor crested cock his dreadful doom recall:
Say, to what hope his suff'ring soul shall flee,
Or where 's the victim worthier death than he?

HODGSON'S Juvenal.

Prompt, as must be your assent; and lively, as must be your sympathy with the writer of the passage just now read to you, I have no hesitation in saying, that in propriety of topics, in vigour of diction, and in solemnity of spirit, it has been sur-

passed by a dramatic poet of our own country, whose statement must convince every understanding, and interest every heart:—

"Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhip't of justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand;
Thou perjur'd and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous: caitiff, to pieces shake,
That, under covert and convenient seeming,
Hast practis'd on man's life! Close-pent-up guilts
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners' mercy!"

Such are the stings of conscious guilt, and such too is the victory, which nature will ultimately obtain over every attempt that may be made to stifle her voice, when she would proclaim to us our sinfulness and our danger.

In most impassioned language, an ancient writer of tragedy has displayed the power of conscience in a case of involuntary transgression.

By a train of unforeseen circumstances, Œdipus discovered that in a fortuitous struggle he had slain his father, whom he supposed to be a stranger, and had taken his mother to the nuptial-bed. Without insisting on the plea of ignorance; without accepting the dutiful and affectionate sympathies of his weeping daughters; without contrasting the meritorious services which he had rendered his country with his own errors, or, as he thought them, misdeeds in private life, he stood aghast at the complicated guilt of parricide and incest; and in the hope of expiating his crimes he descended from the throne, he deprived himself of eye-sight, and was

content for the remainder of his miserable existence to become a wandering exile in a foreign land.

Our instinctive abhorrence of wickedness, and the unavoidable disquietude of those, who think themselves chargeable with it, are to be seen in the conduct and the fate of the unhappy Jocasta. After a series of proofs, which put beyond all doubt the reality of her marriage with a son, her pure and lofty spirit disdained to look for an apology in the consideration that unintentionally and ignorantly she had been betrayed into incest. In the tears and the moans of a beloved daughter, she saw so many witnesses against herself, she became impatient of reflection, she became incapable of solace, she became weary of existence; and, hastening to a recess in the palace, she perished by her own hands.

While the affections are not interested by events which relate to our own duty, and our own welfare, the ingenuity of the poet in ideal scenes, and the subtlety of the theorist upon supposed cases, will readily supply numberless circumstances of extenuation which command our assent in the closet. But in real life, the testimony of nature will sooner or later be heard, and conscience will assert her rights in opposition to all the specious representations which beguile us, where, with equal impunity, we might be candid or severe, because we are forming a judgment upon the condition and the conduct of other men, and are acted upon by no motives to measures of which the issues concern ourselves.

Now, whatsoever may have been the efficacy of the general sentiment, as it prevailed in the heathen

world, neither the history, nor indeed the poetry of the Greeks and Romans will supply you with examples so striking as those which are recorded in Holy Writ, and some of which I will now adduce in order to enforce and elucidate the observations which you lately heard, or in the next discourse will hear, upon the case of Herod.

After the brethren of Joseph had happily obtained the very end for which they had been sent down into Egypt—after they had been graciously permitted to carry home corn for the sustenance of their aged father and their families at a season of threatening famine;—when, at the first sight of the brother whom they had barbarously cast into the pit, they were not appalled, and even recognized him not, because he then refrained from weeping—when, in their conversation with him, not the slightest allusion had been made to the wicked transaction—when they had many sources of satisfaction, and many encouragements to hope—when they had no cause for inquietude except their doubts whether, on returning to Egypt, they should be able to bring with them one brother, Benjamin whom they loved, and thus redeem from captivity Simeon, another brother whom they had never wronged—amidst all these occurrences which bore no resemblance to their ill-treatment of Joseph, they discovered their wickedness, and said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us."

Well did this contrition prepare them for understanding and obeying the injunction which Joseph afterwards gave unto them—"See that ye fall not out by the way."

They had been stirred up, you perceive, from their lethargy by one of those events which, at first sight, as you will find in other parts of this discourse, had no apparent tendency to produce such an effect, and which, by the righteous government of God, are frequently appointed to alarm the unthinking, and to astound the presumptuous.

Surely, there is no discernible connexion between the order for Benjamin to be conducted to Egypt, and the violence which had been offered to Joseph. Be it so; yet any sudden, any distressing, any provoking occurrence will bring to light the deeds that have been long hidden from others, and observed not at all, or rarely, and reluctantly, and in faint and fleeting glimmerings seen by ourselves.

In a subsequent part of the sacred narrative we shall have additional proofs of the *power* which is inseparable from conscience. The affairs of Jacob's family had taken a favourable turn. Five of his brethren and his father had been presented to Pharaoh; the land of Goshen was given to them for habitation and maintenance. According to a very general opinion, not only among the Jews, but in other nations, that on the approach of death the mind is endowed with a spirit of prophecy, Jacob calls his sons together, describes their various characters, points out to them the future destiny of themselves and their progeny; and alluding to the

aggravated wrongs, as well as the distinguished excellencies, of Joseph, he says, in the hearing of all the brotherhood, "the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, and the blessings of his father shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

What was the murmur within their hearts? Can Joseph forget where Jacob remembers? Can Joseph forgive where Jacob condemns? Joseph, indeed, has been hitherto silent, but we are guilty. Thus strong must have been the emotions of those brethren, when the solemn words just now recited to you fell from a dying father. But, from the remembrance of former guilt, the preference given to Joseph, on the death-bed of his father, now excited, not rancorous jealousy, but silent shame.

They went up with Joseph to bury their father; they were placed, however, in a secure and advantageous situation under the influence of Joseph, with the king of Egypt. Hitherto, they had not heard from him the slightest intimation of the inhumanity, which he experienced from them. They had many reasons to suppose that he had forgiven them, and yet they were ill at ease within themselves. Knowing what they deserved, they dreaded the infliction of it. Their minds suddenly fluctuated upon the motives, which had induced Joseph to treat them with so much lenity. And here mark well the wretchedness of wicked men amidst appearances

the most auspicious:—seeing that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite unto us all the evil which we did unto him; and now, for the first time, they acknowledged to Joseph their wickedness; and, for the first time, they heard from him a mention of that wickedness accompanied by a gracious proffer of unexpected, and as they felt, unmerited forgiveness. Most charming is the simplicity, and most impressive is the seriousness of the sacred historian. "And they sent messengers unto Joseph, saying, thy father did command before he died, saying, so shall ye say unto Joseph, forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him." Did Joseph question the truth of the statement that their father wished him to forgive? Had he not, in the hearing of the oppressor and the oppressed, employed a language, which certainly marked no summons to mercy, but how did Joseph feel, and how did he act? Joseph wept from pity, and his brethren wept from compunction, and Joseph added, "Fear not, and his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, behold, we be thy servants. And Joseph said unto them, fear not; for I am in the place of God. But as for you, ye thought evil against me: but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and

your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them."

We could not wonder if an angry or suspicious look—if a pointed rebuke—if a menace half uttered and half stifled had given them the alarm. But, upon a former occasion, when they were returning to their father, afterwards, during the life of their father, while they shared in the protection afforded him; and finally, when they had performed the last acts of duty to Jacob at his burial, their sense of guilt, you will observe, was always stirred up amidst concomitant acts of forbearance and tenderness; nay more, the dread of punishment which they once expressed seems to have proceeded, not from any change in the kind behaviour of their brother, but from the unalterable conviction of their own hearts that they were deserving, not of continued clemency and protection, but severe punishment. Experience itself was not sufficient to sustain their hopes, or to allay their fears, while the voice from within bore witness to their hideous cruelty.

Examples in the times that are gone by are more instructive than precepts, however methodized in detail, or decorated by amplification. Traced into causes and effects, they lay hold of the imagination and the affections, they lead the mind imperceptibly into an agreeable transition from past times to the present. They suggest, in the cases of others, considerations which remotely, or nearly affect ourselves; and as the Old and New Testament abound with historical narratives of this intelligible and

useful kind, I shall carry you forward from the case of Joseph's brethren to other scriptural statements, which have the same tendency to develope the operations of conscience.

In Sacred History then we have another example how far the efficacy of conscience may be suspended, but not destroyed, in the mind of Saul. He had been commanded by Samuel to smite the Amalekites, and to destroy all that they had; their king, their families, and their cattle. But Saul spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and all that was good, while he utterly destroyed every thing that was vile and refuse. The distinction which he made between the valuable and the vile is a proof that he acted not precipitately, but deliberately—that he had in view a sort of compromise between right and wrong—that in partial obedience he found a justification to himself for partial disobedience. Hence, after Samuel had approached him, and was beginning to expostulate with him, the conscience of Saul was blinded and perverted; it was blinded as to the peremptory and unqualified command which had been laid upon him, to spare nothing which belonged to the Amalekites; it was perverted when he gave himself credit for having performed the commandment of the Lord, and spared the people the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice unto God. Secretly he wished to share with his subjects in dividing the best parts of the spoil, and secretly he also intended to display in pompous procession the precious fruits of his victory, and to adorn it with the presence of

a king led captive in chains; and thus ambition, avarice, and hypocrisy supplied their united force to disguise the guilt of disobedience. But, when Samuel said to him, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" and when he added, "because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king," then the film instantly dropped off from the mental eye, the full deformity of his crime stared him in the face; he not only discerned his wickedness, but he confessed it; and with the confession he mingled a supplication for pardon, and a promise of amendment. "I *have* sinned," said the king, "for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now, therefore I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord." In this succession of events you perceive that self-delusion is not a lasting barrier against self-condemnation.

But how deplorable, and if experience did not prepare us for such events, we should add, how incredible was the infatuation of the unhappy king. The same Deity who had directed him to destroy the Amalekites, enabled him to vanquish them. At first, when he had recently obtained a victory, gratitude *did not* induce him to obey; at last, when he was threatened with the loss of his kingdom, fear *did* compel him to feel that he had grievously disobeyed.

From Saul let us turn to his royal successor.

When David had been strongly impressed by the representation of a poor man who had nothing save a little ewe-lamb, which he had brought up and nourished, and that a rich man, when a traveller had come to him, spared to take of his own flock, and by violence plundered from the poor man his favourite ewe-lamb, the anger of the king was kindled against the *unknown* offender; and with honest indignation he exclaimed, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this shall surely die." The natural feelings of the heart, you observe, were not extinguished in David, though he had recently and flagrantly acted in opposition to them. But they operated immediately and irresistibly, while David was intent upon the wickedness of some *other* man; and blinded by self-love, he saw not his own depravity, till Nathan said to him, "Thou art the man—thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife." Little did David, at the opening of the interview, look for such a result; and perhaps, in the course of it, he had secretly congratulated himself upon his own regard to justice and humanity, in determining to punish the rich robber. But when the truth came home to him, he offered no apology, he attempted no evasion; but, like Herod, he perceived and he acknowledged his own wickedness; and in the anguish of his soul, he said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." We should have had little room to wonder, if a defeated army—if a lost province—if severe sickness, or any other calamity had brought him to a sense of his own situation.

But his shame and his remorse were called into action, by one plain and serious tale, the application of which he did not anticipate, and could not resist.

It were difficult to adduce any instance in which the temporary suspension of consience is more strongly marked than we see it in the case of David; and therefore, we cannot wonder that it strongly attracted the attention of that profound philosopher, Bishop Butler, whose words are so much to my purpose, that I shall quote them largely.

"David," he well observes, "in his general character, gave scope to the affections of compassion and good will, as well as to his passions of a worse and another kind. Yet this very man goes on from adultery to murder.

"It is really prodigious to see a man, before so remarkable for virtue and piety, going on *deliberately* from adultery to murder, with the same cool contrivance; and from what appears, with as little disturbance as a man would endeavour to prevent the ill consequences of a mistake he had made in any common matter. That total insensibility of mind with respect to those horrid crimes, after the commission of them, manifestly shows that he did some way or other delude himself: and this could not be with respect to the crimes themselves, they were so manifestly of the greatest kind. What the particular circumstances were with which he extenuated them, and quieted and deceived himself, is not related."

So far Bishop Butler. It is, I grant, impossible quite to stifle our curiosity upon those particulars,

which the sacred historian has not recorded; but the narrative, as it stands, is sufficient to convince us that good men may be guilty of very bad actions. It points out to us the occasional weakness, as well as depravity, of the human mind, when actions, which in the ordinary course of things would excite our indignation and abhorrence, fail to excite them, where the feeling, if it existed at all, would be the more intense, because it concerned ourselves. To me, I must confess, the history of David supplies such materials as will enable us to account for his insensibility, so long as it continued; and possible it is, that it might have continued longer, if an event which Scripture *does* set before us had not occurred. I do not think it a sufficient solution of David's behaviour, to say generally, as we can say truly, that in all human characters there is some leaven of inconsistency.

It may be added also, I grant, generally, that great minds are, from the same ardour of temperament, prone to mingle great virtues with great vices: for the fact would imply no weakness in the authority of conscience, unless it were maintained, that he who often contemplates his own merits is never sensible of his own demerits, or, that calmly contrasting the one with the other, he applauds himself for the one, and stands self-acquitted of the other. David might reasonably look back upon his better qualities of humanity and piety; but in the misconduct of David perfidy and ingratitude were the aggravations of adultery and murder. Uriah had refused to take rest while Joab was sleeping,

and the ark of the Lord might be unprotected; he had refused to go back to his beloved wife when his services might be wanting to his country. But, how was he recompensed? David insidiously and inhumanly commanded, that Uriah should be placed in the front of the battle; and thus his loyalty and his valour became snares to him for the destruction of his life. Now adultery and murder are overt acts so definite; they were committed with so much cool and crafty contrivance, and they had so clear and so close a connexion with each other, that, if in the interval between his cruelty to Uriah and his conversation with Nathan, David had ever thought of them as imputable to himself, he must unavoidably have thought of them with disgust, and shame, and horror.

The truth is, that the sensibility of great minds is peculiarly quick and lively, and the sequel of David's history confirms this position, by the suddenness, and the sincerity, and the intenseness of his compunction when the eye of his conscience was directed to the darker side of his own character. I think, that in every case in which the two first mentioned generalities can be applied, there exist circumstances, little known perhaps to the observer, and little examined by the agent, but which, after they are discovered, will account for the incongruity, be it great or small, and for the apathy, be it for a longer or a shorter duration.

Thus, in the situation of David, as it has been communicated to us, there is a variety of circumstances, which by their united force would give rise

to that insensibility, which not one of them singly would have produced. Uriah was an obscure subject; David was a king. And let no expositor of ethics overlook that deplorable property of the human mind, by which contempt for inferiors weakens our sense of justice more fatally than envy to superiors. David felt his power; and as no resistance was made to it, he escaped some of the uneasy reflections, which such resistance would have suggested; and under the influence of which he might have been compelled to catch an earlier view of his guilt, though his determination not to be disappointed in his wishes might, at the moment, have overcome the consciousness of his wicked intention. David was well aware of his own immunity from responsibility to the laws. David was urged on by the exceeding violence of his lust; and of this passion it is well known, that it is frequently invigorated by every kind of opposition, and that it draws to its aid many other passions quite distinct from itself, such as pride, perfidy, and revenge. David, with the common good, or I would rather say, the common ill fortune of sovereigns, was in little danger of reproach from courtly dependents, who are ready enough to find in the example of a sovereign a plea for their own licentiousness. David, before he committed these two great offences, and for some time afterwards, had met with no honest and intrepid adviser. Those crimes were indeed so flagrant, that we can hardly suppose him to have made any attempt to extenuate them. His personal security, his arduous employment, and his

occasional amusements, stood in the way of reflexion. In his criminal intercourse with the wife of Uriah, the successful lover took such possession of his mind as to make him lose sight of the base seducer and fell murderer. Perhaps, too, as a conqueror, he secretly exulted in the recent and prosperous issue of that battle, in the front of which Uriah had, by his infamous mandate, been placed, and thus exposed to inevitable slaughter.

Under all these circumstances he might forget, I should rather say, than *deceive* himself, though his general principles of right and wrong remained unchanged. But they, who wish to understand thoroughly the power of conscience, would do well to notice the peculiar circumstance, which *is* related—the circumstance which brought him to a view of himself, and which probably is of far greater importance to us than any related circumstance, which, for a time, occasioned this insensibility. It was the unexpected, the well-founded, well-timed, well-conducted tale of Nathan. David was not arraigned in the presence of his nobles and his captains, and therefore, tempted to assume the boldness of conscious innocence, when his heart was giving the lie to his words. David had not to deal with an impertinent intruder, or with an acrimonious accuser. He was addressed by a monitor, whose prophetic office he had been accustomed to revere. He could impute to Nathan no sinister views, no inveterate prejudices, no malicious motive. He was not told of his offence abruptly; he was not incensed by the use of broad and vehement

invective. He was taken, as it were, by surprise. When he at first heard only a plain and interesting narrative, he, without hesitation, applied it rightly to some other man: and when the fact was brought home to himself, he had not the presumption nor the folly to controvert, in his own cause, the principles which he had admitted, or to warp the feelings which he had experienced, while his attention was turned to some nameless criminal, whom, as a man, he could not but condemn, and whom, as a sovereign, he held himself bound to punish. "The man," said David, "who stole the ewe-lamb shall surely *die*." "Thou," said Nathan shortly, "art the man." No eleborate statement—no rhetorical exaggeration—no grave and concatenated series of moral remarks would have been followed by an effect so instantaneous and so complete as was the apologue employed by Nathan in this his unsolicited interview with David. It excluded alike the ingenuity of an evasion, and the hardihood of contradiction. In one and the same moment it convicted, it humbled, it dismayed the guilty hearer.

Now in my view of the subject, David is chargeable, not with self-delusion, but with forgetfulness of himself. He does not appear to have palliated his guilt; but for a season to have been inattentive to it. The latent power of conscience was suspended, but not debilitated. That power came indeed into action late, but it acted surely and most severely: and it may teach all sinners to remember, that ultimately, they will be forced to see the pernicious qualities and dangerous consequences of their

own sins. Let them more especially observe, that David had the advantage of such opportunities for repentance, as they themselves may not have. They may not be assisted as David was by previous habits of virtue and religion. They may not find, as David did, a wise, undaunted, and upright counsellor—they may not be permitted, as David was, in the punishment of his sin, to make their choice of falling into the hand of God rather than of man. They may not experience, as David did, in parental affection, an additional incentive to repentance. Nor, in the anguish of their souls for the death of a beloved child, the offspring of unbridled lust, may they be awakened, as David was, to a fresh and a deeper sense of their own wickedness.

Again, when in full possession of royal power, and amidst the profuse luxuries of a royal feast, Belshazzar, with wanton profaneness, was drinking from the consecrated vessels of silver and gold, which his father, Nebuchadnezzar, had iniquitously taken from the Temple at Jerusalem—when, in the deep recesses of his heart, he not only lost sight of the impious robbery, but laughed perhaps with inhuman scorn at the injured nation—when, surrounded by his princes, and his wives, and his concubines, he abandoned himself to the excesses of the banquet, and praised his idols in contemptuous comparison with the God of the Jews—in that very hour, the last in which we should look for the intrusions of conscience—yes, in that very hour of gaiety and splendour, came forth fingers of a man's hand with four mystical characters on the wall.

What followed?—"His countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another;" the ceremonies of submission performed by his nobles, and the topics of consolation suggested by his queen, were insufficient to quiet him. Eager, not from frivolous curiosity, but from deep dismay, to obtain the interpretation of the handwriting, he was doomed to hear all that could mortify his pride, and all that could affect his spirits, from the mouth of the very interpreter, whom he had selected on account of his sagacity and his fidelity. Belshazzar was told by Daniel, that "the heart of his father Nebuchadnezzar had been lifted up, and therefore he had been deposed from his kingly throne; and that the son, with this terrible example before him, had not 'humbled his spirit, but had lifted *himself* up against the Lord.'" To what extent grief and terror acted upon his mind the historian has not distinctly informed us.

Doubtless the mind of Belshazzar was instantaneously and forcibly struck by the passing scene. Daniel thus explained the portentous words: *Mane, Mane,* "God hath certainly (for this is the import of the repetition) numbered thy kingdom and divided it." *Tekel,* "thou hast been weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." *Paraz* (from which Upharsin is formed with the connective prefix), "and they divide," i. e. "thy kingdom shall be divided between the Medes and Persians;" and this prediction, you should be told, was accom-

plished some years after by Cyrus, who shared the government with Darius.

Have we not in these and the foregoing words of Daniel a crowded and terrific mass of personal reproach, and political denunciation? Mark, however, the sequel; and see in it the power of conscience. Instead of asserting his royal dignity before his assembled nobles—instead of vindicating himself—instead of reviling and threatening Daniel, Belshazzar commanded him to be clothed in scarlet, a chain of gold to be put about his neck, and a proclamation to be issued for making him "the third ruler of the empire."

Such is the homage, which conscious guilt, with the rapidity of instinct, impelled Belshazzar to pay to a faithful and intrepid herald of most unpleasant truths.

It was not then, as some Commentators imagine, solely to fulfil the word of a king, which had previously been pledged to the Magi and Daniel if they should solve the difficulty, and which ought to be sacred. It was not, as others suppose, principally to display before his courtiers the power which he yet retained of conferring honours. It was rather the solicitude which suddenly started up in his perturbed mind to propitiate the interpreter, whom he did not dare to contradict; and to veil compulsory submission under the disguise of fidelity to the promise of reward, and of respect for the abilities of the claimant.

Belshazzar had trembled exceedingly upon the first appearance of the hand-writing, while it was

not understood; and surely the explanation was by no means calculated to allay his apprehensions. Probably, therefore, during the act of honouring Daniel, Belshazzar discerned and inwardly feared the justice of that interpretation, by which he was himself denounced, as weighed in the balances and proved unfit to reign, and his kingdom was doomed to dismemberment and thraldom under a foreign power. Pride would have made him a tyrant, where conscience at its dread tribunal made him a convict, a coward, and imperfectly, a penitent.

But the seeds of compunction were sown too late to produce the fruits of genuine repentance. The hour of trial was past—the measure of the king's sins was filled up. Punishment followed close in the train of accusation, and in that very night Belshazzar was slain.

Mark, I beseech you, the circumstances under which Judas was overtaken by the agonies of self-condemnation. Though his latent ill-will had been gratified by the sentence passed upon Jesus, and though his avarice had been glutted by the ready and full payment of the thirty pieces of silver which he demanded; still he found no occasion for triumph—he met with no grounds for security amidst occurrences which seemed favourable to a wicked man for the execution of his designs, and in the absence of all appearances that vengeance would soon reach him. On the contrary, he was most unexpectedly overpowered by horror. In the hearing of his accomplices, he explicitly owned himself to have sinned in betraying the innocent blood—he

angrily cast down the price of his iniquity in the Temple—he departed from the presence of the persons who had remunerated him, and who doubtless were disposed to acquit, and even to praise him—he was seized by a grievous malady, which began from anguish, and ended in suffocation (an effect which physicians well understand); and I think with many learned men, that the interpretation of Scripture now given to you, is more probable than the language of our common version, "he hanged himself." "The horrors of conscience," says the learned and pious Bishop Taylor, "either choked him, or brought him to the halter."*

The tremendous power of conscience is, however, discernible under either of these interpretations. He breathes out his wicked soul, deservedly abhorred by the faithful and mournful companions of the Master, whom he had betrayed, and unpited even by the chief priests and elders, who had found in him a ready and skilful minister of their own sanguinary malignity. But how had he conducted himself *before* this most terrible crisis? He had given no previous signs of compunction or reluctance—deliberately he had made his bargain, "What will ye give me, and I will betray him?"—eagerly he had sought an opportunity to betray him—having formed this base design, he retained it under circumstances, where we might suppose that the stoutest sinner would in some degree relent—he re-

* Page 12 of the Rule of Conscience.

tained it when Christ, sitting with the Twelve in the celebration of a religious rite, had declared that one of them should betray him—he retained it, when in answer to a question, *insidiously* proposed by himself, he had been told that *he* was the criminal—he retained it amidst the holy and affectionate addresses of our Lord to the companions of Judas, who were filled with sorrow by obscure apprehensions of mischief impending over their beloved Instructor—he so retained it, that after leaving his Master abruptly, he boldly joined the multitude sent out to seize Jesus, and with calm malignity he proposed to them a sign, and even urged them to avail themselves of it, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, the same is he—hold him fast"—he retained it, when the foul deed had been done, and when many a callous heart would at that instant have been softened by the mild and tender language of his injured Saviour—"Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Did he *then* confess his crime? No. Did he implore forgiveness from the victim of his treachery? No. Covetousness, ingratitude, and that rancorous hatred, which the remembrance or the presence of those, whom we have injured is apt to excite, were lurking in his bosom, and actively engaged in dark and dire confederacy for the destruction of Jesus. But, amidst the tumultuous conflict of evil passion, his conscience was utterly in a state of torpor. Rapidly, however, was approaching the season, when all his illusions should vanish—when all his obduracy should be subdued—when he should condemn himself—when he should abhor himself—and,

under the accumulated torments of an awakened conscience, he should pay the penalty of his depravity by a sudden and painful death.

In these most striking events, as well as in the case of Herod, you find that the self-accuser, whom God in his mercy has planted within us, cannot always be eluded by elaborate artifice, nor always overcome by stubborn insensibility.

To conclude—looking beyond human praise and human blame, and contemplating, but without wavering and without dismay, a judgment to come, conscience directs us to weigh our thoughts, words, and deeds, in the balance of the sanctuary. Hence the upright man walketh securely in the road which reason and religion point out to him, and bending his knees before the throne of the Almighty, with firm reliance he implores protection from "the arrow that flieth by night, and the pestilence that walketh at noon-day." But such is by no means the lot of the wicked man. He dare not expect aid and sympathy from the righteous; and if, among the unrighteous, some venal or hardy apologists start up, their sentence of acquittal will not be ratified by his own heart. On one side, he is annoyed by what Isaiah emphatically calls, "the fear of thorns and briars;" and, on the other, he is beset by snares, laid perhaps privily for the innocent, but fraught with perdition to himself. Neither behind him nor before him is there any place of refuge, so long as within him lie the seeds of dissatisfaction with himself for his own past conduct, and disquietude for his future doom. Behind him

is justice, and though (according to the beautiful mythology of the ancients) she be clad in woollen sandals,* and move with soft and uneven step, yet she watchfully, she closely, she incessantly chases the offender, whether from boldness he stalks in the open high-way, or from confusion he strays into untrodden bye-paths, or lurks from terror in dark and winding labyrinths. But, if he turns his eyes from the noiseless but dreaded and loathed pursuer, before him suddenly stands the accusing angel, grasping in one hand a scroll with his high commission to punish, and armed in the other with a flaming sword. Flight is impossible, and resistance would be vain.

A Grecian sage, whom an oracle pronounced the wisest of men, was accustomed to tell his followers, that whensoever any inclination to do amiss was arising in his mind, a kind attendant genius softly whispered to him, "abstain." The same guardian is granted to you and to me, and with circumstances more advantageous; the monitor within us not only throws a curb upon us when we are wrong, but aids

---

* Ex adagio feruntur. *Dii laneos habere pedes.*
Vide PLUTARCH, de sera Dei vindicta.

Lento gradu ad vindictam sui divina procedit ira: tarditatem vero supplicii gravitate compenset.—Valer. Maxim. lib. i. cap. i.

Sera tamen tacitis pœna venit pedibus.
TIBULL. lib. 1. Eleg. 9, v. 4.

Εἴπερ γάρ τε καὶ αὐτίκ' Ὀλύμπιος οὐκ ἐτέλεσσεν,
Ἐκ τε καὶ ὀψὲ τελεῖ.—Iliad, iv. 160.

Ut sit magna, tamen certè lenta ira Deorum est.
JUVENAL, Sat. 13. v. 100.

us with powerful incentives to right. The *genius* of Socrates brought him under the influence of those motives which are supplied by our natural love of virtue, and the dread of self-condemnation. But, the conscience of a Christian is to be regulated by the momentous concerns of futurity.

> Conscience of guilt is prophecy of pain
> And bosom-council advice to decline the blow.

Whatsoever then may be the difference between ourselves and our fellow-creatures, in rank, or wealth, or talents, good and evil are placed before us all. But happy is he, whom a warning or an applauding conscience has conducted to a wise and a virtuous choice. Such a man would not be terrified, though John should rise from the dead, and bent will be his thoughts on the prospect of meeting that Redeemer, who, triumphing over the grave, hath prepared for his faithful followers a glorious immortality in Heaven.

SERMON XVIII.

MATTHEW xiv. 12.

At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, "This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him."

IN a former discourse I explained to you the etymological import of the English word conscience. I set before you the terms which are employed to designate the faculty in some other languages; I made some general remarks upon the power of the principle, which the Deity has implanted within us for the regulation of our moral conduct. I examined, and I hope refuted, some ingenious but dangerous paradoxes upon the subject of remorse; I explained the feeling, and vindicated the term, in opposition to some ingenious but dangerous paradoxes, which sprang out of the celebrated controversy upon Necessity and Liberty, as they are respectively predicated of moral agents. I endeavoured to illustrate those remarks either by direct quotations, or by recorded instances from writers, profane or sacred; and I announced to you my intention to take an early opportunity of throwing

additional light upon the subject, by a series of observations upon the circumstances, which peculiarly marked the case of Herod, as contained in the chapter whence the text is taken. I therefore shall proceed to execute the purpose just now mentioned to you.

As several transactions of several persons named Herod are related in the New Testament; and as the differences between them may not be generally known, I shall lay before you the history of that Herod who is mentioned in the text.

He was one of the sons of Herod the Great. His name was Herod Antipas. His eldest brother, Antipater, had been engaged in a conspiracy against his father, had been discovered and disappointed; and afterwards, upon an attempt to murder him, and for himself to be made king, he was seized by the guards, and ultimately slain. Herod the Great survived this nefarious attempt five days, in the course of which he disinherited his eldest son Antipater before he had been put to death, and divided his dominions thus. He gave the kingdom to Archelaus. He gave Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and Batanæa to Philip, the nephew of Archelaus, and a grandson of Herod the Great; he gave the provinces of Galilee and Peræa to Herod Antipas. There had been another Philip, father of the Philip just now mentioned, and a son of Herod the Great. This Philip had married Mariamne, a daughter of the Jewish high priest, and as she was concerned in the conspiracy of Antipater, his father disinherited Philip the elder. This elder Philip then

married Herodias, grandchild to Herod the Great, by whom he had a daughter named Salome. When Herodias, and her brother-in-law Herod Antipas, for political purposes, were on a journey to Rome, he conceived for her a criminal passion; he proposed marriage to her; and the proposal was accepted on the condition that he should violently divorce his first unblamed, and even unsuspected wife, daughter of the king of Arabia. This outrage produced a war, in which Antipas was ignominiously defeated; and the Jews, forgetting their national partiality for a while, considered this disaster as a just punishment of the Tetrarch for having taken away the life of their countryman, John the Baptist.

In his regal capacity, Herod Antipas, like many other worldlings, united obsequiousness with ambition, and levity with insensibility. He was careless of the interests, and treacherous to the rights of his subjects. In order to gain favour from the emperor of Rome, he placed himself at the head of a courtly and venal sect, who were called from him Herodians, because instigated by his persuasions, and emboldened by his example, they endeavoured to win over the Jews to the payment of an odious and galling tax.

In private life, he avowed the loose tenets of the Sadducees, who denied a future state of retribution; and, like other men in high stations, he abandoned himself to shameless licentiousness, and, day after day, he felt no restraint from the fear of God or the fear of man.

His connexion with Herodias, you see, was facilitated originally by a gross and cruel insult to his first wife; his intercourse with the second was at once adulterous and incestuous; and surely such crimes justified the indignant reproofs of a teacher so wise and so holy as John the Baptist, who had preached to the Jews about two years before his imprisonment.

Herodias, like her husband, was addicted to voluptuousness, and ambitious of power. As Herod Agrippa was a king, and Herod Antipas only a tetrarch, she was jealous of the superiority, and endeavoured to obtain a similar dignity for her husband from the Roman emperor. But her hopes were frustrated; and, probably, her restless disposition and licentious habits were not unknown to the prince, from whom she solicited a very splendid, but very unmerited favour. Herod Antipas was not exalted to a kingdom; he was deprived of the tetrarchite bequeathed to him by his father, and afterwards he, together with his worthless consort, was banished into Spain, or, as others say, to Lyons, where they died in obscurity and misery.

Now, in the sunshine of prosperity he had called his grandees to a birth-day feast; he was charmed with the graceful dancing of Salome, daughter to his first and injured wife, and he promised to grant whatsoever she might ask. With fatal credulity, she consulted the wicked stepmother, and by her was prevailed upon to ask the head of John the Baptist, who had given offence, not to herself, but

to her adviser; and who, by censuring the crimes of Herodias, had, in fact, asserted the cause of Salome's persecuted mother. The promise was claimed; the claim was admitted; the admission of it led to the murder of John; and that murder was followed by the terrors of Herod, whose guilty conscience induced him to believe that John had risen from the dead.

Here is suggested to us a lesson, which cannot be too earnestly inculcated by those who preside over the education of princes, or officially "keep," as it is called, "the conscience of kings." You may be successful in your endeavours to trample on the rights, and to break down the spirits of your people; you may join province to province, and fortress to fortress; you may vanquish the most skilful leaders and the most valiant hosts; you may hear assembled statesmen, warriors, judges, and nobles, join in loud pæans of applause; you may exult when they, who bend the knee at the sacred altar of Jesus Christ, bow with base obsequiousness before the master, who violates every duty which they are commissioned to enforce. You may be deaf to the groans of the oppressed, and the remonstrances of the virtuous; "the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine may be in your feasts;" you may seldom reflect that the eye of Heaven is over you; and you may gradually acquire some portion of insensibility to conscience; but the time will arrive, when experience shall justify the language of a great poet to a great sovereign—

"later days are the wisest and the surest witnesses."*

Posterity is not a respecter of persons. Having no bias from hope or fear, the historian will throw into the shade of oblivion those blazoned excellencies, which had no existence; and he will exhibit in their full deformity the excesses of the libertine, and the outrages of the oppressor.

When Herod commanded John to be destroyed, he was under no apprehension from the visitation of laws, or the censures of his subjects. He forgot that his crime would be read with indignation in distant ages, and distant countries; he little imagined that the panic, which seized him, when he supposed John to have risen from the dead, would be employed to "point a moral in the sanctuary," or to "adorn a tale" for the theatre, it may be, or for the closet. But, if the disgrace which awaited his memory had occurred to him, it might have rescued him from guilt; or, at least, it might have made him deeply sensible of his wickedness, without the concurrent aid of a persuasion that John had risen from the dead. The fear of men unseen might sooner have led to the fear of an unseen God.

Lord Bacon, with his wonted sagacity, informs us that the most extravagant and chimerical fear of lucky or unlucky omens have sometimes been experienced by the doughty champions of atheism. In the instances produced by him, there are weak-

---

* Ἀμέραιδ' ἐπίλοιποι
Μάρτυρες σοφώτατοι.—PINDAR.

nesses and puerilities of which a rational Theist is utterly incapable, and upon which he would look with pity rather than scorn in the most ignorant, and, therefore, the most credulous of his fellow-creatures.

Of this glaring and deplorable inconsistency in the human mind we have another example in Herod, when he passed so quickly from the gaiety of infidelity to the gloom of superstition. In his early and confirmed habits of thought and conversation he had set at naught every argument for a future state of retribution; yet by the tumultuous agitation of a soul polluted with blood he was driven from one extreme to the other. Yesterday, he exclaimed, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." "Surely that which befalleth beasts befalleth the sons of men, even one and the same thing befalleth them, as die the one, so the other die; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity."* But to-day, what is the language of our heroic boaster—"John is risen from the dead."

The conduct of Herodias has, in some points, a strong resemblance to the cruelty of Parysatis; and therefore I may, without impropriety, lay before you two or three particulars.

Mesabates, an eunuch of the king of Persia, was supposed to have cut off the head and hands of Cyrus, a favourite son of Parysatis, and by this act he must have intended to ingratiate himself with

* See Ecclesiastes, chap. iii. ver. 19.

Artaxerxes the reigning king and elder brother, who had weighty reasons for jealousy of Cyrus. Mesabates however took care to give no direct offence to the mother of Cyrus; and therefore, in order to wreak her vengeance she had recourse to a stratagem. She was eminently skilful in chess, and would sometimes play with Artaxerxes. She proposed to play with him for a thousand daricks, (£700, because a darick's value is 14 shillings). She pretended to be ill during the game; she voluntarily lost it, and instantaneously paid down the money. Again, she proposed to play on different conditions—that the winner should have at his or her complete disposal any five servants of the conquered, whom the conqueror might choose. Not discerning her remoter views, Artaxerxes consented; he lost the game; he gave up to Parysatis five of his eunuchs; and among them was Mesabates, distinguished for his fidelity. Upon discovering that Parysatis had put the unhappy man to death, his conscience took the alarm, and severely did he blame himself for his want of caution, and his want of firmness. When the queen, in answer to his reproaches, insultingly said to him, "If I, a queen, care not for the loss of a thousand daricks, how can you who are a king, feel any concern for the life of an old eunuch." His wrath became fiercer from the bitter and barbarous taunt, and he was struck dumb with amazement and horror. Crime, heaped upon crime, at last opened to him the cunning and the malice of his mother in the darkest, but the truest colours. He seized Gigis, the accomplice of Pary-

satis, and commanded her to be executed, even when she had been acquitted upon her trial. He could not indeed persuade himself to sign a fatal sentence against a mother and a queen, but he banished her to Babylon for life, and declared that while she continued there, he would not visit the hated spot. This declaration was extorted from him by the power of conscience, when reproving him for suffering himself to be the instrument of female craft, and female vengeance.

Now, Parysatis, like Herodias, was vindictive. But in satiating her rage, Herodias was less cunning, and less malignant. She desired Salome to ask openly for the head of John; but Parysatis covered her detestable purpose under a general stipulation, in which there was no hint of severity to the slaves, who were to be made over to her. Herodias was content to destroy John by a short process of decapitation; Parysatis commanded Mesobates to suffer the acute and protracted pains of death, for his skin was first torn off from his flesh, and then the mangled carcase was stretched upon three transverse crosses.

From the sacred historians we do not learn, whether or not Herodias was struck with the terror, which overtook Herod. But we find, that Parysatis did not entirely escape punishment; and, when controlled in the exercise of mischief, severed from the minions and flatterers of a court, and confined by a rigorous sentence to one place, where regal dignity was obscured, must not her wounded pride have been at last attended by a wounded conscience? Must not her days have passed without

one cheering reflection; and in the night must not her imagination have been visited by the spectres of victims weltering in blood, and calling down upon their murderer vengeance from the offended gods?

Happily, the sacred historian has recorded the power of conscience upon the mind of Herod.

You cannot forget what I some months ago told you of Herod—that the prostrations of vassals—that the flattery of dependents—that the dainties of the banquet—that the pageantry of a court—that the full possession of power—that the recent, the unblamed, perhaps the applauded, exercise of that power in the destruction of an innocent man, could not ultimately protect Herod from self-reproach—that, in the murdered John, he saw, not merely a blameless man, but that, to his disordered imagination, the guiltless, the once friendless and helpless sufferer had actually risen from the dead; and that the great and sole purpose of his resolution was the infliction of condign punishment upon his barbarous destroyer. Such are the multiplied scenes of woe which rushed upon the mind of Herod when, unexpectedly, he was roused to a sense of his own aggravated crime. He could not look over it—he could not deny it—he did not appeal to his nobles for excuses, nor to his wife and corrupter for consolation—he did not dare to justify the atrocious outrage on the ground of personal indignity, because, forsooth, an obscure, austere, fanatical ascetic, who wore camel's hair, and fed on locusts and wild honey in the wilderness, had presumed to arraign the moral character of a sovereign, and his royal consort.

He did not dare to insist on the necessity of keeping his oath—he did not venture to advert to his desire of pleasing those, who sat at meat with him—he could not at this season apologize for an overt act of sanguinary violence against John, without adverting at the same time to the concomitant guilt of adultery with Herodias his second consort, of injustice to his first consort, whom he had repudiated without provocation, and of his insult to his brother Philip, who was living, when Herodias had been decoyed from him. But, without any wish, any effort, or any foresight of his own, he had been brought to a right view of himself by facts very unlikely to be followed by such consequences. He probably had heard of mighty works performed by some contemporary teacher; and it well becomes us to observe the effect, which the disturbed state of his soul produced in leading him to ascribe to John the stupendous power, which in reality had been exercised by another person. This circumstance deserves to be fully opened to you.

When John the Baptist and Christ first entered upon their respective missions, there was a general expectation among the Jews, that Elias, or that prophet (by which is meant some old prophet) rising from the dead, would appear among them. But so far as history goes, it is uncertain whether Herod partook in the expectation of his countrymen; and the probability is, that if he had heard of it, he would have spurned at it. But the Scripture history shews us that, after the wrongs committed against John, Herod had received tidings of mighty

works performed by some Divine Teacher; and it is remarkable, that while the person performing those miracles was supposed by some to be Elias, by others that Prophet, and by others John the Baptist himself, Herod alone believed John the Baptist to be the expected messenger from heaven, and ascribed to him a miracle greater in our conceptions than would be a command for the blind to see, the deaf to hear, or the lame to walk. John, he says, is risen from the dead. His conscience, as you already see, produced the conviction, and the terrors of it left him no leisure to search for information about the difference between Christ, who did not baptize converts as John baptized them, and John, who did not work miracles as Christ worked them. But his troubled soul did not permit him to make the inquiry, how far the one was to be distinguished from the other—his mind was totally occupied by the remembrance of John whom he had slain—he saw, as I told you, in John, a being protected by the out-stretched arm of Heaven—he saw in him a person recalled from the grave by the will of the Omnipotent, and appointed to bring upon him that chastisement, which he was conscious of having merited, and from which he could not look for deliverance by the interposition of obsequious courts, or armed bands. They might indeed offer incense to the vanity of their ruler—they might protect from violence his person, properly made sacred by the laws. But could they save his soul, stained as it was by a fell murder of the guiltless? Could they procure for him soft and refreshing slumbers in the night

season? Could they dispel those terrors, which cause the "countenance to gather blackness," and envelop the heart in the darkness of despondency, even amidst the brightness of the mid-day sun? No, my brethren, philosophy and common experience unite in bearing record to the truth of what we read in Holy Writ. *That* God, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, has declared by the mouth of an inspired Prophet—"There is no peace for the wicked."*

Let me again advert to some circumstances that mark the distressing and debasing situation, into which Herod, as we see, was plunged, when astonishment and fear had suddenly come upon him.

* It has sometimes occurred to me, that the animated language of Young in his description of Death secretly and continually pursuing his victims, may, by a few changes in the matter and the words, be with consummate propriety accommodated to the case of Herod, as overpowered with surprise and dismay upon his own discovery of his own guilt.

Ask you, where conscience is?
Where is it not? Sure as night follows day,
Conscience unseen treads near the steps of vice,
And keeps strict watch o'er her peculiar haunts:
When pleasure treads the path which reason shuns,
And against reason riot shuts the door;
When pity weeps, to see the reckless crew,
Gaily carousing, make a mock of sin;
When fear is banished, and triumphant thought,
Calling for all the joys beneath the moon,
Against the inward witness turns the key,
And bids him silence keep, he drops the mask
Frowns out at full—they shudder and despair.
Night 6th.

In that situation, probabilities are confounded with improbabilities, and all of them act with the force of novelty, and the force of certainty. Every reality, and every appearance receives its interpretation from the bewildered fancy, and the accumulated terrors of the wretched sinner; he watches where he once slumbered; he believes where he had once rejected; he pities where he once oppressed; he reverences where he once despised; he trembles where he once would have defied. John, he says within himself, is supernaturally risen from the dead, that Herod, the murderer of John, may perish.

At this trying juncture would the magnificence of a palace—would the voices of "singing men and singing women," the eulogies of courtiers, or the smiles of Herodias, pour any balm into his wounded spirit? No—they would have aggravated the evils, which in the ordinary course of things they were calculated to alleviate. The late, but unavailing sense of justice to one wronged individual would have overcome the united efficacy of all the blandishments, which surround a throne. To the self-accusing and self-convicted criminal profuse adulation would have been nauseous, and proffered aid would have served only to deepen the conviction of his guilt and his danger.

Who among my hearers does not here see the wide and important difference between an approving and a disapproving conscience? Who, upon his bended knees, would not supplicate the Almighty for

deliverance from the perplexities, the misgivings, the humiliating compunction, and the paralyzing fears, which conscious guilt inflicted upon the royal murderer?

Now the guilt of Herod was voluntary, but his consciousness of that guilt was the effect of accident; and upon these two points I am led to expatiate for a while, because they suggest to us reflections of the highest importance for directing the course of our actions, and discovering the deceitfulness of our own hearts.

So hood-winked was the memory, or so blunted was the sensibility of Herod, that if the fame of some extraordinary person, who had worked miracles, had not reached his ears, he might have passed through life to death, and from death to judgment, without *one* blush of shame, *one* throb of remorse, *one* ray of light to guide his thoughts towards the actual deformity of his own crime, and the possible severity of its punishment.

In the same manner, my brethren, without one resolution to begin reformation, or one petition to obtain mercy, you may die in *your* sins, unless they be called to your remembrance by events, which have little or no perceptible connexion with their motives, circumstances, or direct consequences. Do you ask me what sort of events they may be? I answer, the event may be light as air, and fleeting as a shadow, to the generality of mankind, but impressive and alarming to the sinner. It may be the discovery of some crime similar or dissimilar to our own, which other men had perpetrated, and which had long

been buried in darkness impenetrable. It may be a gloomy tale, read when all nature around is hushed, and presenting to our troubled imaginations the sufferings of the betrayed virgin, the plundered widow, the defrauded orphan, and the murdered guest. It may be a frightful dream. It may be popular superstition, which in the ordinary course of things we should laugh to scorn; such I mean as the noisy flight of ravens from the left, the midnight howl of dogs, or the moans of some lonely bird haunting the ivy-grown turret of a deserted and mouldering castle. It may be the stars "looking wan," or it may be rapid coruscations in the firmament, thought to resemble the assaults of contending armies; or it may be faintness in the light, and paleness in the colour of the moon; or it may be a rising sun, which sheds in dim eclipse "disastrous twilight o'er half the nations;" it may be some conflict of the elements, when the torrents swell, and the winds roar, and the thunder rolls, and the lightnings glare with violence unusual. It may be some public disaster from pestilence, or famine, or the sword. It may be the throes of acute, or the pressure of lingering sickness. It may be some signal and overwhelming calamity. It may be the destruction of well or ill earned property by a ship-wreck, by a whirlwind, or by conflagration. It may be the death of a beloved parent, the disobedience of an indulged child, the ingratitude of dependents, the perfidy of friends, the vauntings of successful competitors, or the scoffs of foes implacable and invincible.

Every one of these incidents may be quite different in kind, and very remote in time from the heinous transgressions, of which scarcely the faintest vestige has been observed by the transgressors through many successive years. But by any one of them the spell, which holds conscience in bondage may be broken—the little cloud, which now appears like a man's hand, may spread itself in every quarter of the lowering sky—the treacherous calm, which to-day soothes your bosoms, may to-morrow be changed into the desolating tempest—the still small voice, to which you have hitherto scarcely attended, may be followed by the earthquake, or by the fire—in both the earthquake and the fire you will be compelled to acknowledge the presence of the Lord.

Whither then will you flee for safety? The mountains and the rocks cannot cover you—the invoked gales cannot waft you—the hazarded waters cannot roll you away—the wide earth, though you shift your abode from pole to pole, cannot sever you from yourselves. But why? The censor resides in your own breasts, and from his awful decisions there lies no appeal to justice on earth, or to Omniscience in heaven.

Thus with you, as with Herod, the principle of conscience may be roused without any immediate enjoyment, or any immediate suffering, or any immediate action, or any immediate intention of your own to act. Herod was not meditating any outrage for the future when he remembered the past. Your minds may, in like manner, be employed quite harmlessly at the instant when, without exertion and

without design, you for the first time become sensible of the harm, which you have already done. Why then do you neglect the use of those means which you possess, to employ self-examination in acquiring self-knowledge, to advance from self-knowledge to self-command, and from self-command aspire to self-approbation? Why do you lose the advantage and the merit of doing from *choice, this* day, what to-morrow you may be compelled to do by unforeseen and unwelcome necessity?

No vassals, it may be alleged, would obey your commands to wield the destroying axe over the head of your fellow-creatures. Be it so: still, you may have the power, and with the power you may also have the inclination, to annoy and to oppress them; and, from external causes of superiority, you may exercise that power, and gratify that inclination, without control, and without remorse.

Station may protect you from their resentment; contempt may, for a season, deafen you to their complaints; and yet you have no sure and effectual shelter from the ultimate reproaches of conscience. You cannot by a mere act of volition deceive yourselves for ever—you cannot for ever be ignorant of yourselves, because some indistinct glimmerings of guilt have made you prefer ignorance to reflection; and woe to that man in whom the accuser and the avenger are at the same instant to be found in the same person with the accused.

But further, in applying the history of Herod to yourselves, remember, that in your humble stations, you must never dare to make power the measure of

right—never look for justification from the plea that wickedness is committed by the importunity of those whom you love, or the menaces of those whom you fear—never listen to the seductive and impious counsels of corruptors who say to you, "Tush, shall God see it?" The day will come when, as we read in the Book of Wisdom, "the righteous man shall stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him;" when they, "who wearied themselves in the way of wickedness and destruction," shall say within themselves, "This was he, whom we had sometimes in derision (as Herod, in the fullness of power, held John), and who was among us a proverb of reproach. We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! But what hath pride profited *ourselves?* or what good have riches with our vauntings, or revenge with our cruelties, brought unto *us?*"

There are some offences against the laws of God, which, from compression in point of time, are more discernible, and shew at once the whole of their deformity. Hence the commission of offences rarely escapes the notice of conscience, and remorse is felt, though reformation does not always follow. But there is equal if not greater danger to our final salvation, from actions, which, if viewed singly, present to the imagination no alarming magnitude; and yet, by continual repetition, acquire the force of habit, and are in long succession repeated without any immediate check from compunction. As ac-

tions, they are intelligible enough; but as sins, they are often secret even to the sinner himself; they gradually pervade his whole character, and they ultimately produce a very lamentable, and almost incurable insensibility to the judgments of virtuous men, and the displeasure of our Heavenly Judge. Upon this most interesting subject then, I would recommend to your consideration the remarks of a prelate, who, in acuteness of reasoning and depth of reflection, is deservedly ranked among the most distinguished luminaries of the English Church.

"That there is such a thing as self-deceit, is manifest; and that it is the occasion of great part of the unreasonable behaviour of men towards each other; that by means of it they palliate their vices and follies to themselves; and that it prevents their applying to themselves those reproofs and instructions, which they meet with either in Scripture or in moral and religious discourses, though exactly suitable to the state of their own mind and the course of their behaviour. There is one thing further to be added here, that the temper we distinguish by hardness of heart, with respect to others, joined with this self-partiality, will carry a man almost any lengths of wickedness in the way of oppression, hard usage of others, and even to plain injustice, without his having, from what appears, any real sense at all of it."—"Whoever will consider the whole commerce of human life, will see that a great part, perhaps the greatest part, of the intercourse amongst mankind, cannot be reduced to fix determinate rules. Yet in these cases

there is a right and a wrong. A merciful, a liberal, a kind, and compassionate behaviour, which surely is our duty; and an unmerciful, contracted spirit, a hard and oppressive course of behaviour, which is most certainly immoral and vicious. But who can define precisely, wherein that contracted spirit and hard usage of others consist, as murder and theft may be defined? There is not a word in our language, which expresses more detestable wickedness, than *oppression*. Yet the nature of this vice cannot be so exactly stated, nor the bounds of it so determinately marked, as that we shall be able to say in all instances, where right and justice ends, and oppression begins. In these cases there is a great latitude left for every one to determine for, and consequently to deceive himself."*

Thus far Bishop Butler. No judicious hearer could wish for a statement more correct, or language more perspicuous; and sure I am, that the importance of the foregoing quotation will justify the length of it. Let me, then, at the conclusion of this discourse, resume those warnings, which I have already given upon sins, which in your respective situations, may be committed with little resistance to temptation; and which may be again and again reiterated without any immediate and strong remonstrance from conscience. You have not aimed at the life of a fellow-creature—you have not plundered his property, and you will readily confess,

* See Bishop Butler's Sermon, p. 188.

that in either of these cases you would be confounded and terrified. But there are many other cases, in which you may most criminally violate the duty of love to your neighbour; and therefore you would do well to commune with your own hearts upon topics, which, in your last moments, will debase you in your own estimation, and disquiet you with the view of your own danger. Have you imposed upon the credulity or ignorance of a fellow-creature in the transactions of worldly business? Have you abused his confidence by revealing any important secrets, which he communicated for the sake of your counsel and assistance? Have you impertinently explored, and spitefully proclaimed those private faults, which occur more or less in every private family? Have you enviously depreciated his better qualities? Have you insidiously and wantonly exaggerated his failings? Have you for any sinister purpose of your own endeavoured to corrupt his moral principles? Have you encouraged him to talk and think lightly upon the awful truths of religion? Have you refused to him the tribute of gratitude for services, which he has rendered to you? Have you, with unrelenting severity, disturbed his peace and attacked his character in revenge for any wrongs, which he may have unfortunately done to you, and for which he may stand condemned within his own bosom, and be ready to make such reparation as you might equitably require? The conscience of Herod slumbered after greater offences than those, which I have enumerated. Your consciences may not take

the alarm after the commission of sins, which, separately considered, are less than was the sin of Herod, but which, from their number, may involve you in greater guilt than was the guilt of Herod. *He* was at last roused to a sense of his wickedness; and you, my brethren, one day or other, may be compelled to look back, with shame and with anguish, upon the aggregate of your own offences against justice, candour, mercy, and piety.

SERMON XIX.

MATTHEW xiv. 12.

At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, "This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him."

IN my first discourse upon the foregoing text, I explained to you the import of the term *conscience*. I made some general remarks upon the power of it in regulating or reforming our moral conduct; and I endeavoured to shew the real properties of remorse, the nature of which had, in my opinion, been misrepresented by some metaphysical writers of our own age. In my second discourse, I selected from writers, both profane and sacred, some striking instances, in which the operations of conscience were sometimes immediate, and sometimes late, after the commission of sin. In my third discourse I entered fully into the case of Herod, as related in the New Testament—I endeavoured to throw a kind of side-light upon it by some parallel circumstances in a narrative, which Plutarch has inserted in the life of Artaxerxes; and from such various topics as then presented themselves to my mind, I drew some

practical inferences upon the danger, to which we are ourselves exposed from the temporary suspensions of conscience after misdeeds, which, in the ordinary course of human life, we may ourselves be tempted to commit. From the history of Herod, as I explained it to you, and applied it to situations, in which our own innocence may be lost, while for a time we are not visited by remorse, let me now turn your attention to other sinners, whose outrages against common justice and common humanity may sometimes have been equally, if not *more* loathsome, and more pernicious.

There are false tongues, which not only speak, but in the language of the psalmist, "*love* to speak all words which may do hurt." There are tyrants, who, as we read in another psalm, not only watch the steps of their prey, and in all they imagine, *mean* to do evil, but who even boast of themselves that they *can* do it. There are men, who hate and harass their fellow-creatures without poignant provocation, such, for instance, as most men feel from the exposure of their faults by the mouth of an inferior, and such as must have stung Herod to the quick from the rebukes of John upon his adulterous intercourse with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. There are men, who, when suffered to indulge their own lewd appetites without disguise, without restraint, without rebuke from the observer, without a murmur from the wronged, suddenly stand forth as champions, forsooth, in the cause of virtue, array themselves in armour offensive and defensive, and heroically profess to vindi-

cate the honour, which their own misconduct had sullied, and to punish the supposed irregularities, which their own real examples may have occasioned. There are men, who act wickedly, not, like Herod, from the subtle, or the capricious, or the angry suggestions of a favourite female, but from the direct impulses of their own hearts. There are men, who perpetrate *systematically*, what Herod committed suddenly—committed upon *one* occasion only—committed, with perhaps little opportunity for reflection at the moment—committed without any inveterate hatred, in his own mind, towards the sufferer—committed, as it plainly appears, for the purpose of redeeming a pledge, hastily given in a luckless hour of festivity and libidinousness. There are men, who, both in the success and the disappointment of their own cruel measures, find fresh incentives to cruelty—YES, the religionist, who is a serious observer of facts, and an impartial discerner of spirits, will exclaim—to cruelty, wanton to-day, slow to-morrow, infuriate the next day, according to the fluctuating convenience, or the obscure and crooked policy, or the changeable and intractable temper of the miscreants. There are men, to whom the endearments of consanguinity, the delicacies of sex, the privileges of birth and station, and the graces of manners, accomplishments, and talents, present no obstacle in the career of vengeance. There are men, who, from day to day, sin as Herod *once* sinned; and who, in various places, and by various expedients, and with the aid of various accomplices, and in various forms of mischief, perse-

vere in gratifying their own wayward humours and vindictive passions. There are men, who lull their consciences asleep by the perverse use of words accommodated to their own evil wishes and evil projects, and who, not only miscall, but by a *nod*, by a *glance*, by a hint, direct their dependents to miscall treachery by the name of wisdom, obstinacy by the name of firmness, audacity by the name of fortitude, and inhumanity itself by the hallowed name of justice. There are men, whom the prospect of merited indignation for the present, and recorded infamy in the future, will not deter from their nefarious purposes; the fire from heaven has not consumed them—the earth has not opened to swallow them up—disease has not seized upon them—the hand of public justice has not been uplifted against them—they are accustomed to dwell in lofty mansions, to recline on soft couches, to glitter in costly apparel, to hear the sweet music of applause from servile dependents; and, with impunity, to squander the day in trifles, and the night in revelling. Conscience, in such men, *seems* to slumber entirely; or, if by any unexpected event it begins to remonstrate, soon is it silenced by sophistry in the agent, and adulation in his associates. There are men, who do not follow the example of Herod, even in his momentary contrition, but who go on from outrage to outrage with little consciousness of guilt, and little apprehension of peril. Perhaps, in the gloom of night, or in the stillness of solitude, they may now and then writhe under an *unseen* pang, or may heave a sigh, which they would be unwilling for

the panders of their lust, or the tools of their revenge, to overhear. But, the testimony which they reluctantly and secretly bear to the dignity of virtue violated by themselves, "passeth away like a shadow," according to the beautiful imagery of the son of Sirach. "It is like the dust that is blown away by the winds, and like the froth that is driven by the storm; it decays, and it perishes, like the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day."—* Bad passions and bad habits soon resume their sway, and rage with fury redoubled by interruption. From external causes, which cheer them by offers of support and encouragement, and from the continuance and progress of internal self-delusion, such men as I am describing, remain—they *wish* to remain—they *strive* to remain at a distance from the struggles and the toils of that repentance, which, as the Scriptures emphatically tell us, is "not to be repented of;" that repentance, of which I have observed to you again and again, that it consists not in sorrow, not in fear added to sorrow, not in confession extorted by sorrow and fear, not in resolutions formed hastily, and hastily abandoned; but in sincere, in steady, in resolute endeavours to expiate our offences by a complete change for the better in

---

* Mobilis et varia est ferme natura malorum.
Cùm scelus admittunt, superest constantia: quid fas,
Atque nefas, tandem incipiunt sentire peractis
Criminibus; tamen ad mores natura recurrit
Damnatos, fixa et mutari nescia. Nam quis
Peccandi finem posuit sibi? quando recepit
Ejectum semel attritâ de fronte ruborem?

JUVENAL.

every emotion of our hearts, and every action of our lives. Conscience would then exercise its plenary and its peculiar power, and would make us penitent unto salvation. But, if there be any transgressor, part of whose condition, or rather I should say, of whose curse it is, that he is quite insensible to his own misdeeds, or, that he voluntarily persists in them when their atrocity has, on some occasion or other, been clearly or dimly seen; or, what is not very uncommon, that he exults in them, when they have satiated any domineering passion, and have wrought their fullest portion of mischief upon innocent and unprotected sufferers—if there be a sinner, who continues in this most odious course of thought and deed through days, and months, and years—if there be a sinner, who continues in it up to the arrival of that very season, when there is no room for compensation to the oppressed, or amendment in the oppressor—oh! my brethren, who will shed for *him* the tear, which for others he never shed? Who will make the allowances for human infirmity, which he never made? Who can look without horror upon the condition of such an impenitent offender at the hour of death? Who can reflect without trembling, on the danger of his final condemnation in the day of judgment?

After these remarks on the occasional slumber of conscience in wicked men, it is proper for me to direct your attention, first, to one series of particulars in which, through the weakness of our nature, conscience, not well regulated, may lead us astray from the path of real virtue; and, secondly, to

another class of cases equally interesting, in which, through the corruption of that nature, the false plea of conscience has, in various forms, been employed as a cloak for evil-doers.

Even the faults, into which men are betrayed by a misguided conscience, evince the power of it, and, at the same time, they impress upon every serious man the importance of our endeavours to act under the guidance of reason, progressively improved, and frequently corrected by reflection. Our Lord told his disciples that their adversaries, who might drive them out of the synagogue, and put them to death, yet would think that they were doing God service; but this persuasion, and this intention by no means justified their cruelty, because they took no pains to examine the pretensions of the Apostles and their associates—none to explore the genius of the Mosaic religion, which supplied no warrant for the destruction of religious teachers—none to perceive the indissoluble connexion, which binds the love of the Lord our God to the love of our neighbour—none to discover the possible erroneousness, and fallaciousness of those early prepossessions, which led them to adopt and enforce the dogmatical innovations of men as the infallible word of God. Justly as we condemn the rigours of persecution in later ages, every sagacious observer of human nature will acknowledge with much sorrow, and some degree of astonishment, that, in many instances, the persecutor really believed himself to be discharging the duty, which he owed to his Maker, though, in opposition to the kindest feelings of the heart, and

to the benevolent example of his Redeemer, he was inflicting the greatest evil upon his fellow-creatures.

Here then we see the inestimable value of an enlightened conscience. We see the dreadful havoc, which is made in the whole moral system of the mind, when the very light, which is within us, becomes not less fatal to our innocence than darkness itself. We see the necessity of standing on our guard against the prejudices of education—we see the necessity of reflecting upon our own fallibility, even when we feel the strongest conviction both upon the truth, and the importance of any religious tenet—we see the necessity of making large allowance for the same fallibility in other men, whose earnestness in searching the Scripture, whose anxiety to understand its real meaning, and whose readiness to obey its authority, when they suppose that meaning to be understood, candour would lead us to assume, and charity forbids us to deny.

From various causes we may not always be able to discover the truth, but it is always in our power to pursue it, not only with activity, and with ardour, but with that amiable spirit, which will abundantly compensate for our speculative errors, and throw additional lustre upon our virtues, when, with our faith and our knowledge, we unite fortitude, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and Christian love. To the discharge of these arduous and complicated duties, self-examination, self-denial, and deliberate self-command are indispensably requisite;

and therefore we can be under no mistake, whether we have or have not given all diligence to perform the duties themselves, and to cherish the disposition, which facilitates them under all difficulties, and perpetuates them against all temptations. The judgment, which we pass upon such actions and their motives, may safely be trusted by ourselves; and most assuredly it will be ratified by the sentence of an all-wise and all-righteous Deity.

On the other hand, the pride, which generates impatience of contradiction upon points, which have long exercised our intellectual faculties, and which we often conceive to be intrinsically of higher moment, because we had been accustomed to meditate upon them, and to contend for them—the fondness, which we insensibly contract for certain formularies of religious belief, and certain modes of religious ceremonies—the dread, which we feel of fickleness and luke-warmness in what we think the cause of heaven, when it was really the cause of our own prepossessions, our own antipathies, our own credulity, and our own ignorance—all these circumstances may lead us into measures, which a well-directed, and well-disciplined conscience would represent to us as injurious to the best interests of society, and adverse to the plainest and soundest principles of virtue and religion. To his own Master, say those principles, let every religionist stand or fall, while the Master is not man but God; and as to the glory of God, surely his perfections, his moral government and his revealed will never will permit us to

believe that it is promoted by injury to persons, who are the objects of his care, as a Creator, a Redeemer, and a Sanctifier.

The glory of God indeed, as we learn from history, has been the avowed justification of the most flagrant enormities. For the glory of God, and the law given by him to Moses, the Jewish rabble, decoyed and goaded by the Jewish priesthood, dragged the blessed Jesus to the cross—inflicted upon the meek and pious Stephen the most barbarous violence—caused an execrable conspiracy of forty zealots to bind themselves by an oath, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had slain Paul—subjected him to a long and comfortless imprisonment at Rome—and brought upon the noble army of primitive martyrs, all the miseries of dungeons, chains, tortures, and death. For the glory of God, Mahomet raised the standard—maddened his illiterate and sanguinary followers with the wildest frenzy in the defence of the Divine Unity—and spread around him the most hideous desolation. For the glory of God, were undertaken those frantic crusades, which for a long time agitated the Christian world, and have left behind them the most frightful traces of superstition, intolerance, plunder, and bloodshed. For the glory of God, the bigot, as I told you, whether a Romanist, or Protestant, has consigned many a studious, virtuous, and devout Christian to the flames. The glory of God incited Anabaptists, and other fanatics, to trample upon the authority of laws, and to convulse well-founded, and well-administered governments with all the tumults of sedi-

tion, and all the atrocities of carnage. Yet the bewildered imagination, and infuriate passions of these self-appointed champions for the honour of their Maker, pushed them onward from one outrage to another, not merely without the strong reproach, but with the prompt, lively, and full approbation of their perverted consciences.

The real and the deplorable fact is, that pretensions to great sanctity, joined with spiritual power; that national pride in rulers, and their subjects, and the splendour, which shines around victorious warriors, and their companions in arms, act forcibly on the admiration and the sympathies of ordinary observers, and impart popularity to opinions, which, from fortuitous circumstances, are connected with the success of impostors, and which, in addition to other properties, carry with them the supposed authority of religion.

Though pride, policy, and ambition, might occasionally sway the minds of the leaders in these scenes of woe; possible it is, that some even of them were, in part, influenced by their religious prejudices; and certain it is, that many of their followers were actuated by false conceptions of the obligations, which lay upon them to support, what they called the truth revealed by God, against persons, whom they supposed to be the despisers of those truths, and therefore the adversaries of that God.

The Jewish priests exercised dominion over the minds of the Jewish people—Mahomet panted for conquest—the inquisitor retained profits, and honours

in things temporal, while he preserved and extended his authority in spiritual things. These transgressors do wrong, not so much from the imbecility or inactivity of their intellect, as from the obliquity of their principles, the stubbornness of their habits, and the obduracy of their hearts. But, in most cases, the majority of their adherents were at once the tools of artifice and worldly-mindedness in their guides, and the dupes of their own involuntary and unperceived self-deceit.

"*I believe whatsoever the Church believes*," is a maxim well suited to the purposes of the ambitious and selfish wordlings. But men who are quite exempt from the influence of ambition and selfishness are exposed to delusion, both in speculation and in practice; and the delusion is the more mischievous, because it is supported by self-applause. Hence, in speculation, the merit of faith is heightened by the entire and voluntary surrender of our reason to supposed mysteries; and the enthusiast does not deceive or misrepresent himself when he says, in the well-known words of St. Austin, "I believe, because the thing is impossible." Well it were for mankind, if the evil stopped with internal persuasion and external profession; but it goes much farther, as we know by experience. Hence, in practice, the abundance of our zeal makes us insensible to the scantiness of our charity; we imperceptibly learn to love ourselves, when we have been accustomed to despise and vilify others; the vigilance of conscience is lulled by that self-love, and in the emphatic language of Milton, the "chief strong

hold of our hypocrisy is to be ever judging one another."* Hence too, men are not only seduced into injustice and cruelty, but claim to themselves a greater degree of merit, when, in supporting their favourite tenets, they have made the greater sacrifice of their benevolence—when their passions are arrayed on the side of their prejudices—when the natural course of our sentiments is inverted—when the friend abandons or assails his friends—when the child ceases to love and to revere his parents—and when the glad tidings of the Gospel, with the direct assent of a mistaken conscience, are made an apology for sending upon earth not peace, but a sword.

In this state of mind, the more deplorable because the more incorrigible, a higher value is set upon actions in proportion as they stand opposed to the common dictates of our moral sense, and the monitor within us passes such a sentence as not only to justify, but to endear and consecrate those very practices, which a purer and brighter view of our duty would lead us to condemn.

It is therefore the duty of every spiritual instructor to warn his hearers against the illusions, and the extravagancies, and the crimes, into which they may be hurried, where a mistaken sense of duty has gained the ascendancy over their judgment and their feelings. He should again and again recall to their minds the mingled weakness and deceitfulness of the heart. He should point out to them the personal talents, the personal virtues, the laborious in-

* See Milton's Orat. Areopag, p. 170, vol. i. prose works.

quiries, and the upright intentions of our fellow-Christians in their opinions upon those obscure and controverted points, many of which are placed above the ken of our limited faculties; and therefore, by the wisest of men, are humbly and reverently left among the secret things, that belong unto the Lord our God. He should say to them, "prove all things; hold fast to that, which, after impartial and honest inquiries, seems to yourselves good." But remember that your neighbour, who, from the same premises, has not drawn the same conclusions, may, with the same singleness of heart, follow the dictates of his own conscience. Convince him, if you can, but despise him not—hate him not—do not, upon any pretence of your own zealous regard for the glory of God, take from him his life, nor his reputation, nor his liberty, nor any thing which is his, as a member of the same society, as a believer in the same religion, and a candidate for the same immortality in the world to come.

From the mischiefs, which thus flow from a misguided conscience, where sincerity, as we commonly understand the word, may not be excluded, let me turn to another class of dangers, where the plea of conscience is accompanied by insincerity.

Hypocrisy, we have been told, does homage to the cause of virtue; and certain it is, that after calm reflection, no man ever loved himself for neglecting virtue, or intentionally seeming to disregard it when neglected. In the same manner, the frequency, the earnestness, and the occasional solemnity, with which the plea of conscience is urged by bad men

for bad ends, are proofs of the importance, which the good sense and the good principles of mankind assign, and which the most worthless are known to assign to that plea, when it is rightly used. Basely, however, has it been abused, as an instrument to the various kinds of craft, in which priests, statesmen, and even tyrants, when it suited them to play the game of impostors, find their own personal account. The bigot dogmatizes and reviles, because he, forsooth, in conscience is bound to maintain the momentous truths of religion. The inquisitor, because he shrinks from the daring impiety, and dreads the perilous contagion of heresy, is led by his conscience to have recourse to the excruciating rack and the slowly consuming fire. The corrupt judge will conscientiously inflict severe punishments, not in proportion to the degree, in which any known law has been actually violated, but in accommodation to his own temporizing purposes in obtaining or preserving the favour of the powerful oppressor. Led by conscience not to throw off all regard to reputation, the spendthrift puts aside the claims of common justice, in order to satisfy the claims of what he calls honour, and in this perversion of moral principle, he looks for sympathy, and sometimes finds it, among the dissolute or the inconsiderate. The miser, guided by his conscience to bear testimony to good morals, turns away his face from the helpless and weeping suppliant, because part of the sufferer's misfortunes arose from faults, which the covetous are not tempted to commit, and for this very reason are most prone to cen-

sure. In my own experience, I have met with many instances of evasion or justification upon the ground of conscience, when some unpleasant duty was to be performed—when some inconvenient promise was to be fulfilled—when the humble were to be protected—when the proud were to be opposed—when a friend was to be relieved—or when a foe was to be spared. Hence, too, in the ordinary intercourse of life, impartial and serious observers are alarmed, where the smooth tongue, the mantling cheek, or the downcast eye lend their aid to specious pretences of conscience. The men, of whom I am speaking, by the very success with which they deceive others, acquire habitual dexterity in deceiving themselves, and for this transition of deceit we may easily account. They have to practise on the same credulity, which they had before turned to advantage. When superficial observers had, with good intentions, relied implicitly on the piteous tales, sanctimonious jargon, and oracular predictions of self-called conscientious men. They have to co-operate with the same depravity in other deceivers, who have a common interest in the accomplishment of their purposes, and who are therefore ready to profess what they do not inwardly believe, and to applaud what they inwardly condemn. They have to harangue upon the same plausible topics of tender and unfeigned solicitude for the public weal, while they are deliberately prosecuting their own private designs of selfishness or malignity.

Liars are said to give credit to their own lies when they have often been told without detection; and, as

it is much less agreeable to examine the real motives of our actions than to contemplate their appearances, the deceiver is imperceptibly himself deceived for a certain season, and to a certain extent. If, however, any unwelcome misgivings should now and then arise, he will endeavour to subdue them, and he will exercise his memory in resuscitating, and his diligence in re-embodying, and his ingenuity in re-modeling those arguments, which he first employed with hesitation, and in process of time enforces with confidence, because they have not been visibly refuted by facts. Thus, through that deceitfulness of the heart, to which I adverted, it happens, that the false plea of conscience, which is so odious to good men, beguiles and emboldens the bad. Be it so. Yet the latent force of conscience may be brought into action by numerous causes—some obstacles, hitherto unexperienced, present themselves to the deceiver—some unexpected resistance is made to his plans—some unlucky excess in playing his part—some result of his measures different from that, which he held out to gain approbation and assistance—some overt act of meanness and oppression—some violation of sobriety, temperance, or chastity—some expressions hastily uttered, but severely scrutinized—some unfavourable rumour, well or ill founded—some insinuation of a rival in pretensions to extraordinary sanctity or extraordinary zeal—these, and many other circumstances, may strip the deceiver of his disguises; but having ceased to be misunderstood by others, he cannot fail in a short time to be rightly and fearfully un-

derstood by himself. Indignation pursues the unmasked saint; and what, I would ask you, are the expedients through which the sinner, at once detested by others and detected by himself, can escape remorse? Mark, I beseech you well, what I am now going to observe. The authority of conscience, either in ourselves or other men, is alike demonstrated by the two contrary situations of concealment and discovery.

For the successful issue of his projects the deceiver is indebted to the general estimation, in which men hold the efficacy of conscience; and, in the reverse of his fortune, he experimentally knows, that the artifices employed toward other men, and the self-delusion, which he has long cherished, serve only to embitter his sorrows, when his natural sense of right and wrong has been excited by a just but involuntary view of his own real character.

Thus, conscience pretended, terminates in a sincere but painful feeling of conscience, and conscience disobeyed, inflicts the penalties of disobedience.

The sum of the foregoing statements, and the concomitant remarks is this—

Knowing our weakness before we sin, and our blindness in sinning, the moral Governor of the World has furnished us with that principle of conscience, which, to men of calm and deep reflection, must assume the most awful aspect, as the representative of the Deity himself, as a monitor recalling to our memory what the Deity knows; and as an accuser, compelling us now to condemn what the Deity will hereafter punish.

Will the devout Christian then hesitate to adopt the opinion or the language of an ancient writer, where he concisely and luminously tells us—"To the whole human race conscience is a God."*

That principle, if it be not counteracted by negligence, by perverseness, or habitual depravity, cannot fail to have the most powerful and most salutary efficacy. It will enable us in this state of moral discipline to be more than conquerors over the baseness of every selfish, and the maliciousness of every unsocial affection. It will remind us, that Jezebel incited Ahab to seize the vineyard of Naboth—that Herodias prevailed upon Herod to take away the life of John—that in neither case the tempter could eventually procure peace of mind to the tempted—that, after his interview with Elijah, Ahab rent his clothes, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth; and that, on the report of mighty deeds which Herod ascribed to John, he supposed him to have risen from the dead, as a minister for the justice of heaven against his destroyer. It will teach us to be more on our guard against the wanderings, irritations, and antipathies of our own minds, than against the spiteful or wily suggestions of other men. It will teach us not to "think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think"—not to run the hazard of approaching temptation to those sins "which more easily beset us"—not to assume that we stand firmly, where it behoves us to "take heed lest we fall"—not to forget that many, who like Peter, are puffed up by presumption, and by presump-

* Menander.

tion betrayed into apostacy, may not, like Peter, have the advantage to hear the cock crow twice, and thus be excited to early, unfeigned, and accepted repentance. It will urge us "to cleanse ourselves from secret faults," and to check presumptuous sins before they get the dominion over us. Finally, it will guide our steps to that most honourable and most happy situation, in which we, by the aid of heaven, have procured for ourselves a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man.

But when provision has been so amply made for our innocence and our tranquillity, who must not lament, that from the giddiness of voluptuousness, the frowardness of infatuation, and the insolence of power, there should be so many rivals to the influence, so many traitors to the interests, so many rebels to the authority of the guide graciously given to us from above? It is indeed scarcely possible to avoid the appearances of exaggeration, when we pourtray the deformity of those sins, which arise from the often stifled or often vanquished suggestions of conscience.

From opportunities for personal observation, or from attention to the records of history, we shall find that circumstances have *sometimes* existed more deplorable than the case of Herod, and that greater wickedness has been accompanied with less remorse.

Offenders there may be, who, if the spectre of John reeking with blood has not hitherto scared them in their dreams, would be little disposed to believe that he would rise from the dead, or to ho-

nour him for those stupendous works, which Herod ascribed to John. Amidst scenes of coarse and noisy debauchery, they would be rather inclined to trample upon his breathless corpse. Triumphing in the plenitude of their might and the success of their machinations, they would hail with loud plaudits the spectacle of his head placed in a charger on their luxurious table. They would buffet his memory with savage taunts—they, with unabated and undistinguishing acrimony, would expatiate upon faults, whether justly or unjustly imputed to him. Mingling hypocrisy with scorn, they would inveigh against him as an impostor who deserved to die—they, with studied and diversfied indignities, would commit his body to the grave—maliciously and profanely they would consign his soul to the regions of the accursed.

"He that hath ears to hear let him hear"—let him pause, let him reflect, let him examine, let him be slow to echo and re-echo every sentence of condemnation pronounced by the lips of the rash, of the obsequious, of the unfeeling, and of that hireling crew, who, as a philosophical poet tells us,

> ——— drop the man in their account
> And vote the *mantle* into majesty.
> YOUNG, Night 6th.

To conclude. Unquestionably, my brethren, the persecution of John was a heinous sin. But Herod, like the men upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, was not perhaps the greatest of sinners. If, therefore, in any other country, or in any other age, there

should have been persons, who followed the example of Herod rather in his crime than in his penitence, deeply must they have been interested in this solemn declaration—"Except ye repent, (doubtless in the world to come) YE shall likewise perish."

But from such guilt, arising from such causes, in habitual insensibility, or deliberate disobedience to the warnings of conscience, may God in his mercy protect every man, who hears me this day.

SERMON XX.*

ASSIZE SERMON.

Acts xxii. 25.

And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

To men eminently distinguished for the extent of their learning and the depth of their researches, it has appeared an appropriate, and I had almost said, an exclusive character of the Christian revelation, that so many parts of it are delivered in an historical form. The commands laid down by our blessed Lord, though sufficiently comprehensive to direct us aright in all the internal postures of our minds, and in all the varities of our external condition, are not burthensome from their number, nor are they removed from the common moral apprehension of believers, by artificial arrangement, by subtle and minute distinctions, or by curious and recondite modes of expression. Thus far then, the gracious Author of our salvation has provided that we should understand what we ought to practice; and for the same great end, yet further provision has been made by

* March 1797.

the numerous, and most impressive, and most instructive narratives, which constitute so very large, and so very useful a part of the sacred records.

In those records *example* comes in to the aid of precept. The true spirit of Christianity is unfolded by the personal conduct of its holy founder, and of his immediate followers; in so much that, were it possible for us to entertain any doubt upon the import or the *extent* of the laws prescribed to us, no diligent and impartial reader of the Gospel can long be at a loss for practical illustrations.

To men, therefore, who live, as the indulgent providence of God has long permitted the inhabitants of this nation to live, under the guidance of fixed and systematic laws, the passage I have just now read to you, must seem an illustration of *this* kind, most worthy of our attention. St. Paul had been rescued from the violence of his intolerant and bigoted countrymen by Roman soldiers, who carried him into a place called the Castle of Antonia in Jerusalem; and as he stood upon the stairs he obtained leave from the chief captain to make his defence in the Hebrew tongue, before a Hebrew audience, whom he affectionately addressed by the appellation of "Men, brethren, and fathers." For a time they listened to his solemn statements and his masterly reasonings with some curiosity, or at least without impatience. But when the Apostle told them that Jesus, whom they were conscious of having crucified, had commanded him "to go far hence to the Gentiles," the mean and captious prejudices of his hearers took the alarm—they cast off their

clothes, threw dust into the air, and exclaimed, "Away with such a fellow from the earth." Upon this fresh outrage of popular fury, the chief captain ordered St. Paul to be brought into the castle, and by the power which the Roman laws permitted him to exercise over strangers, he bade his attendants examine Paul by scourges for the purpose (as it should seem from the original Greek word εξεταζειν,* and from several events related in the context,) of extorting from him some confession, for what reasons the inhabitants of Jerusalem "cried so against him." While they were binding him with thongs, as preparatory to the infliction of scourges, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, "Is it *lawful* for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?" The discretion or the humanity of the centurion was roused by this question. He instantly communicated the intelligence to the chief captain, and desired him "to take heed what he did, for the man was a *Roman*." The chief captain, as we find in the course of his conversation with St. Paul, had obtained the freedom of a Roman citizen by purchase. St. Paul had, however, a stronger claim to it by birth, for he was a native of Tarsus, the metropolis of Cilicia, where his father or some of his ancestors probably had been recompensed with freedom for military services. Now the inhabitants of Tarsus having favoured the party of Julius Cæsar during the civil wars, though *not* formed into a regular colony, were honoured by great privileges, and even the city itself

* See Hesychius, quoted by D. Whitby, in loco.

had obtained from Augustus the name of Juliopolis. The Apostle, then, availed himself of the rights which belonged to him as a Roman, and the chief captain knowing the validity of those rights, 'loosed him from his bonds." He certainly had no very favourable impressions about St. Paul; for, as we read in the close of the preceding chapter, he had contemptuously asked him, "Canst thou speak Greek?" Yet more invidiously he inquired, whether Paul was not the Ægyptian who before these days had made an uproar, and led out into the wilderness four thousand men who were murderers." But neither his scorn nor his suspicions made him inattentive to his duty, and as he knew what the law required him to do to a man, who had pleaded that he was a Roman, he readily and honourably obeyed the law.

From this story we first learn the importance of clear and definite laws to the well-being of society; and secondly, have a luminous and decisive proof that Christianity does not exclude its followers from the protection, which laws may be able to give against capricious, insolent, or vindictive oppression. First, then, I shall show the essential importance of clear and definite laws to the well-being of society.

Without entering into those thorny disputes, in the course of which the origin of *government* may not always have been distinguished with sufficient precision from the origin of *society*, we may contend that, as on the one hand society is indebted for stability and order to government; so, on the other hand, to live by *one* man's will must be "the cause,"

as said the acute and pious Hooker, "of *all* men's misery." A despot, indeed, gratifies his own untameable desires by his own uncontrolable power without law, and beyond law, and against law. He decrees according to any momentary sally of passion—he kindles upon every frivolous provocation—he interdicts without necessity—he punishes without warning—he strikes, but hears not—he slumbers in the tempest—he rages in the calm—he connives to-day, and to-morrow he destroys. Despotism, therefore, is alike adverse to every known principle of every regular government—to honour which thrives under monarchy—to moderation which is the vital principle of aristocracy—and to that austere virtue which has been described by some writers as necessary to the existence of a permanent and well-founded republic. But wheresoever wise and impartial laws have been introduced, there a curb is thrown upon arbitrary will, and in point of fact, such laws, as all know, not from visionary or dubious theories, but from the solid testimony of history, have been judiciously instituted, and steadily executed under each of the three forms which I have enumerated. It is upon the basis of these laws, that under each of those governments liberty of some kind or other has been founded, and from that liberty so founded and so supported, have arisen constitutions, in which various modifications of society have existed, with high degrees of moral and intellectual improvement, with correct notions of justice, and with a long and secure enjoyment of happiness among their respective

members. In the correct administration of those laws, we have our best protection for the accomplishment of every purpose, which society in its most perfect state can be supposed to answer. For as men make greater advances in civilization and knowledge, they supply what is defective, or rectify what has ceased to be proper, in the laws themselves. But as they were at first compelled to flee to laws as a refuge from evil, so in all succeeding stages laws must be employed to establish or protect every sort, and almost every measure of good attained or attainable, to bring it within the reach of individuals—to diffuse it through all ranks and all ages—to make it not the privilege of few, but the right of all—to exclude every plea of ignorance or error by rules, which every man is able to understand, and which, for his own sake, as well as that of his fellow-citizens, he is at once interested and bounden to obey. Whatsoever forms such laws may assume, and whatsoever accommodations they may undergo by the authority of human wisdom, carefully watching the changes and necessities of human affairs, still, where the benefits of legal institutions are extended to every man, the obligation to observe them is co-ordinate and co-extensive with our pretensions to any participation of the benefits themselves.

It may with laws, perhaps, as with some other of the choicest blessings, which God has conferred upon us, and of which he has made our own endeavours the instrument for our own welfare, that the value of them may in some cases be most clearly

discerned by their absence. Hence, probably, arose the singular but very instructive custom of the Persians,* who on the death of their kings suffered their laws to lose their force for the space of five days, in order that after the expiration of that time the people might return more cheerfully to their obedience. Were the same experiment to be made in other countries, where learning is more diffused, where manners are more civilized, and where religion is more pure, and even more efficacious, than they were among the Persians, the same consequences would suddenly flow in temporary disorder, and the same anxious wishes would be excited for the speedy and entire removal of it.

There are many virtues, which, according to the phraseology of writers upon ethics and jurisprudence, are of *imperfect obligation,* and which, depending on the private will and the private power of individuals, are more or less extensive, and in their effects more or less beneficial. But the most extensive and most necessary duty of all lies in the restraints prohibiting us to do harm to others. Good we may do, if we will; and should do, where we can. But harm we must *not* do, though we can do it ever so easily, and though we wish to do it ever so eagerly. The comforts, the conveniencies, and the ornaments of society are promoted and multiplied by the former duty. But society would cease even to exist unless the latter were made our duty by the very strictest

* Vide Sextum Empiricum adversus Mathematicos, p. 70, et Stobœum, p. 294.

obligations, and unless the public strength were combined with the public will to punish every wanton, and every deliberate overt act of violation. This is the language of nature herself, engraven in characters so large and so bright, that he who runneth may read them—it is the language of philosophy, investigating the powers, the faculties, and the force of every social and every dissocial affection, which our Creator hath given to man—it is the language also of *law*, providing for the happiness of man, by adding fresh sanctions to his duty. "Thou shalt do no murder," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," are prohibitions which human and divine laws have alike proclaimed for our well being. They admit of no partial or crooked exceptions. They provide for general security by a general, undistinguishing, irresistible claim to compliance. If we obey, the physical result is good to ourselves and others—if we disobey, the moral result is to ourselves punishment.

I am no stranger to the distinctions which have been made between the nature of governments and their principles*—between that which constitutes them, and that which brings them into action—between their *particular structures*, which may vary indefinitely, and those human passions which set them in motion, and which, being specifically the same through the whole of the human race, require directions and restraints nearly the same. Such directions, be it remembered, and such restraints, so far as they can be supplied by human means, are

* See Montesquieu.

chiefly to be found in laws. To them must we apply, if not for the acquisition, at least for the preservation of all that is intelligible or wholesome in liberty itself. They secure for us the fruits of our personal labour and personal ingenuity—they chain up our wild and irregular caprices—they shelter us from many pernicious consequences of our prepossessions and our mistakes—they elevate us from the meanness, or check us in the excess of our selfish affections. In a tone of command, which it is perilous for us to disregard, they cry aloud to our vindictive and ferocious passions, "thus far shall ye come." Now it is in the very essence of law to exclude dark and dangerous uncertainty both in our political and civil concerns. Here it is that we are protected from the effects of arbitrary will, not only of governors over subjects, but of subjects themselves one towards another. Whatever may have been the practice of particular men in particular situations, one clear principle, either expressly, or by implication, must pervade every legitimate government, by whatever name it may be called—I mean, that the authority of law is placed as a barrier against the humours and passions of all the rational but imperfect beings over whom it is exercised—over those who ordain it—over those who execrate it—over those who are called upon to observe it without any limitation or any exception but what may be warranted explicitly by the same supreme legislature, and appointed solely for the same public good. No distinctions of rank or fortune, no difference in bodily strength or intellectual capacity, no exterior or fortuitous advantage which one

man possesses over another, can be permitted to set itself up in opposition to the sovereignty of the law. It does not directly recognize the infinite diversities that are to be found in the faculties, in the conditions, and characters of individuals; but it provides such restraints as may prevent these diversities from operating to the interruption or diminution of the common weal. If it guards the rich man from depredation, with equal wisdom and equal efficacy does it shelter the poor man from oppression. Though it cannot without the concurrence of many other causes, produce the greatest sum of happiness of which our nature is capable, it certainly tends to alleviate some of the greatest miseries to which we are exposed. Nay, it protects the very blessings which it does not create. Having no alloy of prejudice or passion in itself, it averts many of the dreadful evils, which in the absence of it might be apprehended from the wayward prejudices or the boisterous passions of individuals left to contend against individuals, by their own strength or their own wisdom—by strength which brutal violence might every moment overcome—or by wisdom, which in a thousand instances the lowest cunning might over-reach.

Abstractedly considered, property may not be the offspring of law, but law, practically considered, is substantially and eminently not the regulator only, but the protector of property. From nature we derive existence and the right to preserve it; but from law, which acknowledges and confines that right, we acquire *additional* means of preservation against

the arrow that flieth by night, and the ruffian that stalketh in noon-day. Antecedently to society we may be free, if exemption from outward restraint deserves the name—but, amidst the regulations of society, our freedom puts on a comelier form, it is armed against encroachment with superior might, it acts with bolder energies and a steadier aim in fulfilling the noblest ends of our being, as moral creatures related to moral creatures, and co-operating with them for mutual safety and mutual improvement.

But, while I insist upon the trancendental authority, and the extensive utility of laws, I would not be understood to lay no stress upon the force of opinion, of custom, and religion; yet we know that the effects of custom, of opinion, and of religion, are sometimes feeble, sometimes precarious, and sometimes even mischievous in their influence upon the conduct of a being frail and short-sighted like man. We know that opinion often errs, that custom degenerates, and that religion, if mingled with gloomy superstition, with impetuous enthusiasm, with the lust of spiritual domination, or with the fury of sanguinary persecution, breaks in upon the tranquillity, upon the employment, upon the sweetest comforts, and upon the most precious rights of a civilized people. We know that against such errors in opinion, when they reach to practice, such degeneracy of custom, when it runs into excess, such abuses of religion, when they impel to direct injury, the surest protection is to be found in laws. Yet further do we know, that when laws are judicious

and equitable, they open a wider field for the exercise of our better affections in the production of positive good, and that they give additional efficacy to all that is sound in opinion, all that is useful in custom, and to all that may be true as an object of faith, or right as a rule of conduct in the hallowed doctrines of religion itself. Laws, it is true, take a tincture from the opinions, the customs, and the prevailing modes of religion that distinguish the times in which they are enacted; nor is it improbable that many institutions at which we smile as fantastic, or shudder as ferocious, had a temporary fitness which rendered their observance less irksome, and their consequences less injurious than we are apt to suppose in a better form of society. On the other hand, where opinion results from mental improvement, or leads to it, where custom facilitates the progress of civilization, where religion invigorates the sanctions of pure and sound morality, they respectively tend to soften the harshness, correct the irregularities, and to refine and elevate the spirit of law. According to those analogies which pervade the whole system of moral causes and effects, each of them seems to hold a separate province, and yet all of them fall under some common principles of natural action and re-action, which make them conjointly the instruments of social happiness. One caution, however, is always to be observed. Wheresoever laws, through the silent and gradual influence of opinion, or custom, or religion, have begun to lose their hold upon public approbation, it becomes every wise legislator to mark the

change attentively, to investigate its sources, whether remote or immediate, and to adopt such regulations as may either secure a willing obedience, or give effect to new coercions, by impressing a general conviction that for the community they are become necessary, and therefore towards individuals are not unjust.

But, in proportion as laws are entitled to our veneration and obedience, in consequence of being adapted to our real condition, to our wants, and our dangers, to our infirmities as they are to be spared, and to our vices as they need to be restrained, doubtless in the same proportion it must ever be necessary that they be administered in a spirit of uprightness, and with a view to the same ends of public utility for which they were primarily designed. In despotic governments, where the tyrant lingers immured in his palace, or, dissolved in voluptuous effeminacy delegates his power to flatterers, and to slaves, laws, in appearance the most equitable and humane, are observed to afford a slender protection to the indigent, to the industrious, and yet more strikingly to those persons whose affluence holds out a dazzling lure to the rapacity of confiscation, disguised under the mantle of authority.* But in kingdoms that have made a greater progress in civilization and knowledge, these tremendous mischiefs are not much to be apprehended; for, of such civilization and such knowledge the

* On despots, &c. see the notes to Helvetius on Education, pp. 371, 372, &c. vol. 1.

ministers of justice themselves are personally partakers; they have access to the advantages of liberal and learned education; they have opportunities for observing the force of all the moral causes which influence the behaviour of the community; they are not permitted to engage in any military, or in any civil employments, which might not only occupy too large a portion of their time, but warp their minds by those peculiarities which are not always to be avoided, even in useful and honourable professions. They know that the public eye is steadily, though respectfully bent, as well upon those by whom the laws are administered, as upon those by whom they are enacted. They know that the manly and generous spirit of those laws must find its way to the understandings and the feelings of their observers, and that, screened as they may themselves sometimes be from punishment, they lie open to ignominy if they pervert what is just—if they darken what is plain—or, if, preferring terror to mercy, they sharpen the edge of that which is severe. In this country too, they in our own times have been sheltered from some temptations to which the frailty of their predecessors may have been exposed, and they stand in the view of all the world, not only invested with power, but exalted to that independence which may enable and animate them to use it well—to be loyal without the compliances of vassals—to be patriotic without the artifices of demagogues—to be exact without refinement, lenient without weakness, and firm without obduracy.

Unquestionably in all ages, and in all countries, the decisions of magistrates have been watched with no less jealousy than the measures of statesmen. They act in public, and have no plea for intrigue. They act before the parties, and can have no excuse for looking to oblique or remote objects. In truth, as their conduct is to be regulated upon settled and acknowledged principles, more within the reach of general apprehension than schemes of policy, or the aims of politicians, it is more easy for us to determine how far they fulfil or violate the sacred trust committed to their charge. Hence it is, that scorn and detestation have ever followed them, for indolence, for precipitation, for partiality, and, above all for that rigour which turns a deaf ear to the supplications of the wretched, and which, with the fierceness of a savage, or the malignity of a fiend, delights to wield the sword over the neck even of the guilty. On the contrary, splendid is the reward treasured up for those whom the auspicious light of knowledge, and a conscientious sense of duty have endowed with the opposite virtues—with unwearied diligence, with patient calmness, with inflexible integrity, with a fondness for the spirit of the law which maketh alive, in preference to the letter which killeth; and more especially for that disposition without which, amidst the inevitable imperfections of human affairs, and the numberless infirmities of human creatures, wisdom itself would be debased into craft, and public justice would do the office of oppression—I mean, that disposition which ever bears towards the side of clemency. To these

qualities, wheresoever they exist, the very instinct of self-preservation will not permit us to be inattentive. The approbation of our moral sense is instantaneously and unfeignedly bestowed upon the possessor; and together with our applause we give the tribute of our gratitude to him as the guardian of our peace, our freedom, our property, and our lives.

But further, the moralist who explores the general nature of man, will thus far agree with the legislator who is to provide for the well-being of man in society, that laws derive much of their utility from being *known* and *fixed* rules. Gradually they produce a conformity to what they require from us in our expectations, our judgments, and our habits. They gain authority over our minds, not merely by the lapse of time, or the mechanism of custom, but by the testimony of experience to their fitness. Doubtless from those changes which are silently going forward in the natural or the moral world, unforeseen inconveniences will arise; and when they grow up into a visible and formidable magnitude, the same purposes of general good which once gave rise and perpetuity to a law, may require sometimes modification, and sometimes repeal. But in the rules of public justice, as well as in the forms of government, sudden or frequent alterations are big with danger, and, I am sure, with such danger as often eludes the penetration of the best and wisest men, and such as far surpasses the supposed or actual advantages of change.

In the sound and undebauched wisdom of ancient times, we may find examples where men most sin-

cerely attached to the interests of their countrymen, and most accurately informed of their real wants, have borne witness to the importance of stability in laws. Thus we read of an ancient legislator * who in a code destined for the use of the Locrians ordained that every man who proposed that an old law should be revoked or a new one enacted, should put his neck into a halter, that if his proposal was ratified by the consent of the people he should be set free, and that if it was rejected he should instantly be put to death. The principle, I grant, was carried to an excess that would be unwarrantable and intolerable in our own age, yet among a people less refined, and less enlightened, such a regulation might be of use in facilitating, not only the introduction, but the establishment, of a general system which could be efficacious only by being permanent, and which, having wrought its proper effect, might gradually prepare the minds of men for some relaxation of its original severity. Perhaps, however, the Athenian lawgiver acted upon the same principle with more judgment as well as more moderation. Having bound the senate by an oath not to innovate upon the system of jurisprudence which he had recently prepared for them, he obtained for himself permission to be absent for ten years, wishing no doubt to avoid the tumultuous intrusions of those who importuned

* Demosthenes, in the speech against Timocrates and Stobæus, p. 280, assigned this law to Zaleucus. But Diodorus Siculus, book xii, speaks of Charondas as the author.

him,* sometimes to explain and sometimes to alter; and expecting also, that to the good sense of his countrymen during this period, his laws would be familiarized by use, and endeared too by experience. Such restraints upon a want or love of novelty were necessary in the primary formation even of free states, and I have to add, that in such states, whether mixed or pure, when formed, the strictest obedience is due to the laws, because under such governments even private crimes have a tendency to public ones, and attack the constitution itself, while they injure private persons.†

If further arguments be necessary, there is one upon which I should most strenuously insist, as pointing out the importance of preserving a system of laws when it has been arranged into principles, and disciplined by a long series of experiments. In philosophical discoveries, in military skill, in political regulations, much is often effected in a short time by a favourable concurrence of circumstances, by the splendid genius of individuals, or by the invigorated and concentrated exertions of a people. But in the fair administration of public justice—in the nice adaptation of general rules to particular

* See Plutarch, in vita Solonis.

† Lucius Flamininus cum esset Consul, in Gallia exoratus in convivio a scorto est, ut securi feriret aliquem eorum, qui in vinculis essent damnati rei capitalis. Hic Tito, fratre suo, censore, qui proximus ante me fuerat, elapsus est: mihi vero et Placco neutiquam probari potuit tam flagitiosa et tam perdita libido, quæ cum probro privato conjungeret imperii dedecus.—Cato Major, in M. T. Cic. de Senectute. Parag. 12.

cases, diversified as they severally are by endless varieties through the operations of collateral causes and effects, and in the aggregate of their inherent merits or demerits—in the arduous task of proportioning decision to evidence, and punishment to crimes—in the entire subjugation of every untoward passion and every lurking prejudice, to the public will as expressed by law, and the public welfare as promoted by it—the advances even of polished and enlightened nations are unsteady and slow.

In thus enforcing observations which more particularly call for the notice, and affect the happiness of my own countrymen, I hope not to be misunderstood. No wish have I to justify the blind and superstitious veneration we all of us are apt to feel for the profession in which we have been educated, and in the study of which we have made successful trials of our intellectual vigour. I mean not to apologize for that dastardly caution which is ever ready to start at the lion in the way—for that sullen or supercilious indolence which often serves as a veil to our apathy to the interests of our fellow creatures—for the abject timidity which shrinks from giving offence to the corrupt or the imperious—or for the narrow policy which misconstrues exemplary failure into indiscrimate and insuperable objections to all experiments, though warily conducted, and though urgently called for by the evident and well-considered exigencies of a kingdom. On the other hand, it becomes us seriously to weigh the mischiefs which may result from lifting up private opinion too hardily against the public wisdom of the state—from

changes, which accidentally meeting or directly producing new and unforeseen occurrences, may lead to new and unforeseen inconveniences—from measures, which though undertaken from honest motives, and decorated with plausible names, may introduce unsteadiness into a system which derives so much of its authority over opinion, and so much of its usefulness in practice from the very circumstance of stability, but which must be deprived of that authority and that usefulness where changes indiscreetly made call for further changes in rapid and incalculable succession—upon this awful subject it becomes every prudent and honest man carefully to lay to heart the deep and salutary observations with which I am happy to close this first part of my discourse. "In truth," said a great writer, "ancient laws, especially that have a common concern, are not the issues of the prudence of this or that council and senate; but they are the production of the various experiences and applications of the wisest thing in the inferior world; to wit, time, which, as it discovers day after day new inconveniences, so it does successively apply new remedies, and indeed it is a kind of aggregation of the discoveries, results, and applications of ages and events; so that it is a great adventure to go about to alter without very great necessity, and under the greatest demonstration of safety and convenience imaginable."*

These are the words of a Judge who to legal

* See Sir Matthew Hale's considerations touching the amendment of Laws, Hargrave's tracts, p. 254.

knowledge and legal experience, such as have rarely fallen to the lot of man, united the most various erudition, and the most exemplary probity. His opinions are confirmed too, if confirmation they need, by the measured and impartial language of another celebrated writer, in whom we have the genuine spirit of philosophy without the superficial and fallacious jargon of that which usurps its name, and whose researches upon ethics were not less profound nor less instructive, than his matchless investigations into the works of nature.* "Time," he tells us, "is the greatest innovator, and if time of course alter things to the worse, and wisdom and council shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end? It is true, that what is settled by custom though it be not good, yet at least it is fit, and that things which have long gone together are as it were confederate within themselves, whereas new things piece not so well. All this is true, if time stood still, which contrariwise moveth so round that a froward retention of custom is as turbulent a thing as an innovation, and they that revere too much old times are but a scorn to the new. It were good therefore that man in his innovations would follow the example of time itself, which indeed innovateth greatly, but quietly, and by degrees scarce to be perceived."

With propriety then may we extend to law that emphatical language of the prophet, which the same illustrious writer has applied to governments; that

* See Bacon's Essay, 24th, upon Innovation.

if ever we make a stand upon the old paths, we should be careful "to look about us and discover what is the straight and right way, and so to walk therein, and find rest for our souls."*

Now, after these general, but I hope pertinent and instructive observations resulting from the history recorded in my text, I proceed, in the second place, to shew how far it affords a proof, that the gospel does not exclude its followers from the protection which laws may afford them against capricious, insolent, or vindictive oppression.

Christianity is a religion intended for general use; it appeals to the common feelings of our nature, and never clashes with the unbiassed dictates of our reason. We may therefore rank it among the beneficial tendencies, as well as the peculiar evidences of such a religion, that the author of it abstained from all abstruse speculations, and all controversial discussions upon topics either of politics or of philosophy. With simplicity and with dignity he inculcated the purest and most enlarged principles of virtue; and happy is it for mankind that the energies of those principles have so slight a connection with the intricate and fluctuating opinions of men, whether upon metaphysical abstractions, which tend oftener to perplex than convince, or upon modes of Government, in the comparison of which we are too prone to be guided by our passions and our prejudices, rather than by our sober judgment.

Much then is it to be lamented, that zeal without

---

* Jeremiah, chap. vi. verse 16.

knowledge should ever have disgraced the Christian cause—should have weakened the efficacy of our heavenly Master's precepts upon the understandings and hearts of believers, and given occasion for so many pernicious objections to the credibility of his mission. But the ways of God are uniform as well as holy. His word is in all instances consistent with the economy of his works, and being intended to exalt and purify the character of man, the *noblest* of those works in this lower world, it neither does contain, nor can be supposed to contain, any such precepts as are adverse to our clear conceptions of moral rectitude—to our rights as they have been represented to exist in a state of nature, or to the restraints, and I add earnestly, the improvements of those rights, as they are experimentally found in well regulated societies. Now St. Paul must have known the peculiar duties, which it was incumbent upon him to practise as the follower of a crucified Master—as the preacher of the doctrine of the Cross itself—as a candidate for a city "not built with hands, eternal in the heavens." Yet in the story of the text he evidently acted as if the firmness of a citizen were *not* inconsistent with the sanctity of an inspired apostle, and the heroism of a future martyr. He seemed not to think that the laws were a mere dead letter—that what a minister of the executive power should from whim or from cruelty be pleased to ordain, was itself a law, in contradiction to the written and standing institutions of the supreme legislative—or, that being a subject, he was therefore excluded from the right to judge of his own claims to protec-

tion from the very authority which he was bound to obey. Observant as he was, and as he taught his followers to be, of the respect due to such magistrates as fulfilled the important ends of their office, he on several occasions expresses just indignation against those who acted a less worthy part. When the high priest Ananias commanded him to be smitten on the mouth, what was the reply of the great Apostle?—"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou here to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten, contrary to to the law?" Concerned, indeed, he afterwards was at the severe reproaches which, in the first tumults of anger, he had uttered against a man invested with civil and ecclesiastical power. But he neither retracted nor explained away the legal objections he had made to an oppressor, who, in the execution of his office, had presumed to treat him with illegal indignity. With the same fortitude he, on the occasion related in my text, resisted the attempts of the Roman soldiers, when, acting according to the directions of their commander, they were proceeding to bind him with thongs. He made, you see, no display of affected humility in submitting to a wrong, which natural discretion and his civil rights authorized him to avert. He sought no opportunity for wreaking at a distant period his well-founded displeasure upon the offenders, by letting them rush forward, as without a warning they would have done, to the completion of their offence. Mingling courage with prudence, he applied to the good sense of the centurion for redress against the soldiers. He

did not say, is it just or humane for you to join with my Jewish foes, and to strike an innocent man? But he asked whether it was lawful for them to scourge him? He made his appeal to the law upon the principles of the law, because he was a Roman. He sought refuge in the formalities, as well as in the spirit of the law, because he was uncondemned. Ignorant he could not be, that in the course of his apostolical mission much fouler insults, and much sharper sufferings were reserved for him by the providence of God. Yet he considered himself as a member of human society. He had a just sense of his privileges, and in defeating the perversion of law, he probably supposed himself to be in the most effectual manner an assertor of the law's real authority, and a promoter of the best ends for which law had been ordained.

Here then, not merely in the words, but in the actions of the Apostle, we have a striking proof, that Christianity does not break in upon our freedom or our happiness as the members of a civilized community; and they who by the aid of straggling and obscure passages oppose the general design of the Gospel dispensation—they who torture plain and simple words into remote and intricate conclusions—they who load particular expressions with strange interpretations, without any regard to the situation of the speaker, or the import of the context—all such teachers, whatever ingenuity they may shew, whatever motives they may profess, and at whatever ends they may really aim, disgrace that very religion which they pretend to support. They set faith

at variance with common sense. By absurd and fantastic comments upon what they miscall the fear of God, they convert every precept inculcating the love of our neighbour into a shadowy, unsubstantial, and delusive mockery. They thrust aside all genuine and solid virtue, in order to make room for a specious, but a spurious form of godliness. They rend asunder every intelligible and consoling analogy between the government of God and the government of man. They bind us down to the strange and degrading inconsistency of obeying God because he is invariably just, and of obeying man though he should be systematically unjust. They bring discredit no less upon the laws of man by mistaking their ends, than upon the laws of God by misinterpreting their conditions. They bereave Christianity of the wholesome and benign influence which it ought to have on the best interests of society among enlightened and well disposed religionists; and therefore deservedly do they incur the suspicion of being actuated by the blind infatuation of bigots, or the mercenary selfishness of deceivers. Against the miserable sophistry of such shallow, or such headstrong, or such perfidious interpreters, we may with confidence plant the authority of apostolical opinion, explained by apostolical example. St. Paul, you find, was for standing fast, not only in the liberty with which Christ had made him free from the burdensome yoke of Jewish ceremonies, but in the liberty with which the laws of nature, and the Roman state had made him free, against the machinations of his Jewish oppressors. It was in the

provisions of fixed law that he sought protection; and where he had the courage to seek, there also he had the good fortune to find it. The chief captain, we are told, upon hearing that Paul was a Roman, was afraid, because he had bound him. On the morrow, too, when he would have known the certainty whereof he was accused by the Jews, he loosed him from his bonds, and having commanded the chief priests and all the council to appear, he brought Paul down from the castle, and set him before them. Afterwards, when his unfeeling persecutors lay in wait for the life of Paul, this excellent officer, instead of listening to their clamours or gratifying their malevolence, took further measures for enabling St. Paul to obtain plenary security from the law to which he had appealed.

In the various circumstances of this story, you may perceive the baleful effects of a persecuting temper, when it tramples upon the rights, and strikes at the life, of honest and unoffending Christians. You may further see the efficacy of established laws in guarding the freedom and the personal safety of social man against the outrages of a superstitious multitude, and the stratagems of a corrupt, an arrogant, and inhuman priesthood. From the fate of St. Stephen, in which there was tumultuous fury without any appearance of forensic proceedings, no argument can be drawn connected with my subject. With reverence, however, let us examine how far, in the course of an event yet more important, the example of our heavenly Master resembles that of his Apostle. By the compact between Pompey and Hyrcanus, the inhabit-

ants of Jerusalem were not exposed to the severities usually inflicted on a conquered people—they retained some privileges—they exercised some judicial power—they were checked only from carrying it to such an extent as to adjudge criminals to death. Hence they reminded Pilate of their inability to put in force their own law, by which, they said, Jesus ought to die, and which indeed ordained a sentence of stoning against such offenders as they represented him. Hence they sought the interposition of a Roman magistrate—they applied to Roman forms of law—they procured an order for the infliction of a Roman punishment.

Now in order to complete the great work of our salvation, it was necessary that the Son of God should yield up his soul upon the cross, and set the last seal of truth to the divinity of his mission by rising from the grave. On this *extraordinary* occasion, and therefore not to be wrested through all its circumstances indiscriminately and precipitately into conclusions for regulating our conduct in ordinary cases—on this occasion, I say, the humility and wisdom of Christ did not permit him to call in the aid of the civil power, while his barbarous enemies were crying, "Crucify him, crucify him;" and perhaps it is not wholly improper to remark, that by the ordinary providence of God co-operating with his extraordinary dispensations, Jesus was not invested with those civil rights which Paul indisputably possessed and strenuously asserted. But, amidst the submission of the holy Jesus to the will of his Father—amidst his willingness to drink of

the cup which was prepared for him—amidst his silence under accusation, his calmness under scourges, his resignation under the torments of an ignominious death—even then did he give no encouragement to the ferocious outrages of the Jews, nor bestow the sanction even of indirect approbation upon the illegal proceedings of the Roman governor. Discovering in Jesus no fault worthy of death—suspecting that they had delivered him out of envy—awed by the secret misgivings of his own conscience—and scared at the portentous message conveyed to him from his afflicted wife, Pilate wished to chastise him and let him go. But in the true spirit of unblushing, unrelenting, unprincipled fanaticism, which looks upon means as consecrated by ends, the Jews combined hypocrisy with barbarity, and for the moment they vaunted of their dutiful allegiance to Cæsar whom they really hated, in order to secure the destruction of Jesus whom they hated *more*. "If thou let him go," they cried, "thou art not Cæsar's friend—whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." Alarmed at the imputations against Jesus, which in the instant of hearing them he did not believe to be true, but of which he dreaded the possible effect upon the mind of his Imperial Master, Pilate suffered Jesus to be led to the cross. But he seems to have doubted the legality as well as the moral justice of what he was about to do. Finding however that "he could avail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made," he fled to superstition as a refuge from remorse—he washed his hands in water, and said, "I am innocent of the death of this just person, see ye to it."

Thus far we have before us the irresolute delays and the criminal concessions of a magistrate, who felt that in the administration of the law he was doing that which the law, rightly understood, would not have justified. But what was the conduct of our blessed Lord himself? When Pilate said, "Behold how many things they witness against you," he answered nothing. When Pilate asked, "whence art thou?" he gave him no answer. But when Pilate, in his own legal capacity, spoke of his own legal authority, when he said, "knowest thou that I have power to crucify and power to release thee?" then Jesus *did* answer, "Thou couldst have no power against me except it was given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me to thee has the greater sin." Our Lord seems not to have considered Pilate as acting according to the manner in which the law required him to act. He did *not* acquit him of violating the law. He spoke of himself, not as submitting to the arbitrary will of man, but as obeying the righteous will of his Father, by whom it was ordained that he should thus suffer. Pilate he explicitly condemned for officially permitting his death, though he condemned the Jews much more pointedly for urging Pilate to the deed. The behaviour then of our Lord, thus fully, and I hope not uninstructively explained, is no less friendly to the civil concerns of mankind and the safety of subjects, than were the bolder measures of St. Paul himself, as related in the text.

Far be it from me to slacken the obligations which Christianity lays upon all its followers to

respect earthly governors, and to obey earthly laws. The Gospel commands us not only to fear God, but to love the brotherhood, and to honour all men. It bids us submit ourselves to every ordinance of man, because every ordinance of man, by whatever name it may be distinguished, eventually fulfils the unsearchable purposes of God. It tells us that we must be "subject not only for wrath, but for conscience sake." It commands us to pay the tribute of reverence and obedience to "kings as supreme, and unto governors." But while thus solemnly and thus expressly it enforces our duties as subjects, it fails not to describe in terms equally definite and equally emphatical, the no less momentous and no less indispensable duties of governors themselves; for it speaks of them as persons "who are appointed for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well." These indeed are the salutary purposes of all just laws whatsoever; and wheresoever such purposes are effected by such laws, there disobedience is an act not only of rebellion against man, but of impiety towards God.

To conclude. Upon the mind of every man who clearly understands, and accurately estimates the importance of fixed and impartial laws, the example of St. Paul will assuredly have the most happy influence. It will teach us, not indeed to crouch to the oppressor, but to do homage to those persons, who, by a firm and honest administration of public justice, protect us against oppression. It will teach us to look upon a government by laws, as one of the most interesting objects that can affect us in our

temporal concerns. It will animate us to assert the rights which they confer upon us, not surely for the purpose of gratifying our vanity, or of letting loose our wild and capricious humours, but of giving stability and increase to the stock of general happiness. Finally, my brethren, it calls for our thankfulness to the Great Disposer of all events, for permitting us to live in a country, where unrestrained and dispassionate inquiry has enabled us to give a reason of the hope that is in us, "when we bow the knee in the name of Jesus"—a country, where the security and real honour of an Established Church must ever be compatible with the most enlarged toleration—in a country, where neither injustice in private life, nor oppression in public, can find the smallest plea in the fundamental principles of our laws, or the genuine spirit of our ancient, wise, and free constitution.

SERMON XXI.*

DEFENCE OF DAVID.

Psalm xix. 10.

His delight was in cursing, and it shall happen unto him. He loved not blessing, therefore it shall be far from him.

The history of the royal Psalmist abounds with circumstances which awaken our curiosity, and which, if properly understood and seriously contemplated, have a direct tendency to strengthen our faith, and to improve our hearts. That Providence which in a most extraordinary manner presided over the measures and interests of David, is equally visible in his prosperity and his adversity, in the recompense of his virtues and the punishment of his faults. He had been taken from feeding the young lambs, and by the appointment of that Being who penetrates into the deepest recesses of the human soul, and foresees the remost consequences of human action, he governed the Jewish people at a time, when, from the recent institution of royalty, sagacity, firmness, and integrity were essentially necessary in the character of him who wielded the sceptre; and though in the earlier ages of mankind,

* April 1813.

wealth often consisted in the extent of land and the number of cattle—though Elisha, before he assumed the prophetic office, was a man of opulence, because he possessed twelve yoke of oxen—and though at later times and in another country, a Roman hero passed from the plough to the consulate, and a Roman sage employed his labour in the practice and his talents in the science of agriculture—the disproportion in the case of David between his former and his subsequent condition is far greater; and from the singularity as well as the magnitude of the change, strikes our imaginations more forcibly, for—the shepherd became a king. The Deity, you know, is represented as saying of him, "with my holy oil have I anointed him;" and although this ceremony, with imperfect or even erroneous notions of its original use and typical import, has been transferred to Christian potentates, who, by the legal and ordinary rights of consanguinity, have ascended the throne of their parents or their near kindred; yet it well becomes me to remark, that among the Jews unction was employed only when a new form of government was introduced, as when Saul was made the first king—or when the order of succession was changed, as when David was raised to the royal dignity after Saul had forfeited his title to it—or, as when Jehu was anointed by Elisha to rule over Israel, or Hazael was anointed by Elijah to govern Syria—or when Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, was anointed to be the monarch of Judah, to the exclusion of an elder brother. Again, you read in the 2d Psalm, "the Lord hath said to me, Thou art my son, this day have I

begotten thee;" and in verse 19, "I make him my first born." In order to understand the peculiar and full meaning of these words, you must be reminded, that in the Old Testament kings and magistrates are sometimes styled Gods, and Sons of the Most High, and the phrase, as applied to David, has more than a common degree of propriety, because under the Jewish polity God himself was king, and therefore by advancing David to the throne, he plenarily conferred upon him the privileges of primogeniture. David was distinguished too by a well known title, under which no other man, however virtuous—no other king, however illustrious, is described to us, for he is called a man after God's own heart; and as this designation has afforded matter for contemptuous cavil to the enemies of revealed religion, and is not always justly appreciated by the sincerest believers, it may be of use for me to tell you, that it relates to him, not in his private, but in his public capacity, and was bestowed upon him in consequence of the ardour with which he opposed the corruptions of idolatry, and the steadiness with which he endeavoured to establish the worship of the one true God.

It is apparent then, that David has been represented to us as a person, who, in a very eminent degree, was favoured by the Almighty; and from this fact, hypothetically admitted by some, and honestly admitted by others, various inferences have been drawn, on account of the numerous and emphatical curses, which we read in the 109th Psalm. How, says the infidel, can David deserve to be

called a man after God's own heart, if, at the very moment in which he professes to write under the inspiration of God, he conceived and uttered such horrible imprecations? Weighed in the scale of impartial justice, and stripped of the glare which has been thrown around his name by the servility of historical flatterers, the cunning of ambitious priests, and the prejudices of a credulous posterity, the piety of David is only a contemptible mixture of fanaticism and hypocrisy. As a fanatic he deceived himself, and became reconciled to his own gross and numerous crimes. As a hypocrite he endeavoured to deceive others; and under the mask of extraordinary devotion he wished to conceal his libertinism, pride, and cruelty from the view of a timorous, short-sighted, and illiterate multitude. Such is the reasoning and such is the asperity of the speculative scoffer. But what is the sophistry of the unblushing and unforgiving reprobate? It is this—why should I who am only one of the many—I who set up no pretensions to superior sanctity—I who have received no signal deliverances from the hand of the Almighty—why should I be condemned for calling down the vengeance of heaven upon mine enemies—for impeding or repining at their success—for exulting in their misfortunes—for recounting, proclaiming, and exaggerating their faults, when the history of David supplied me with a precedent, which, if pleaded by a man of my condition, would amount nearly to a justification? If from the scoffer and the reprobate we should turn to the humble and pious Christian,

he doubtless would state the perplexity of his understanding and the perturbation of his spirits, in more temperate and becoming terms. To what testimony from history, or to what rules in criticism, must I have recourse, in order to find out such an explanation of these maledictions, as shall reconcile them to the acknowledged virtues of a sovereign, upon whom encomiums so many and so just are bestowed in Holy Writ? To the infidel I would say, that when the words, upon which he expatiates with so much triumphant scorn, are accurately explained, they will afford no ground for his objections. I would check the confidence of the swearer by telling him, that in David's real conduct there is no precedent at all to be found for his own odious habit, and that, if even there were, it would not answer the purpose of justification, because such curses whether employed by David or any other man, must be offensive in the sight of God. To the embarrassed but docile Christian I would offer instruction and consolation by assuring him, that such parts of the Psalm as *were* actually spoken by David in his own person, are quite consistent with his better qualities; and that the other parts, by which serious readers have been distressed, because they misconceived them, are indications of malevolence and presumption, *not* in David himself, but in one of his most criminal and implacable foes. I would say to all the three persons whom I have been mentioning, that in other parts of Scripture are related of David other transactions, in which all of them may discover very striking and very proper subjects for ap-

plause and for imitation. Those subjects are to be found in the frequent and solemn meditations of this king upon the Deity as the Creator, Preserver, and righteous Judge of the whole earth—in his anxious and faithful discharge of those duties, in which a sovereign over his subjects resembles a father to his children—in his unweared endeavours to uphold the authority of that religion, and those laws, which he knew to have come down miraculously from heaven, and to be intimately connected with the prosperity, the safety, and even the existence of the Jewish state—in his animated praises upon the beauty of holiness—in his indignant censures upon the deformity of guilt—in his zeal for the glory of Jehovah—in his patience under the pressure of adversity—in his gratitude for mercies received, and yet more conspicuously, in his deep and unfeigned contrition for every sin, and for every aggravation of sin committed by himself. Of such a man we should not lightly believe that, speaking from himself, he would deliberately hold the indecorous, acrimonious, and even impious language which is contained in many parts of the Psalm now under consideration; and my hope is, that, after due attention to the remarks which I intend to lay before you, your mistakes will be rectified, that your inquietude will be allayed, and that your habitual admiration of David will continue undiminished.

First, then, I will set before you the words of the Psalm itself, and occasionally accompany them with short explanations. I shall state my reasons for rejecting several interpretations of several difficult passages

in this Psalm, which to my mind are not satisfactory. I shall afterwards give such explanations as appear to me the most probable and the most instructive. I shall then make some practical observations and conclude. I must however premise that the subject is of high importance, and that therefore I have to intreat your pardon for exceeding the ordinary limits of a discourse from the pulpit.

The opinion of many critics who maintain that David, instead of uttering a wish, merely anticipates an event, and that a future time only is to be employed was once very popular. It has however been long and justly abandoned by learned men so far as that event relates to the contemporaries of David. It has I know formerly been suggested that David had in view the history of Achitophel, who had engaged among the conspirators with Absalom. True; but in the history of Achitophel there is no circumstance in which his punishment, as recorded in Scripture, corresponds with the language of the Psalm, whether in the way of imprecation, or the way of prediction, it be considered as representing the impending doom of that traitor. Doubtless his conduct was most nefarious. He had encouraged Absalom to commit a kind of incest with the concubines of his father—to pour forth heavy complaints against that father for insults and wrongs of which in point of fact he was guiltless—and by these means to inflame a giddy, credulous, and turbulent multitude, "till the hand of all that were with Absalom should be strong." Achitophel availed him-

self of his own authority and popularity in giving effect to evil advice, for as we read, Sam. 16th chap. "The counsel which he counselled in those days was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God." But as it should seem by the especial direction of the deity, who had determined to blast the traitorous designs of David's enemies, Absalom and all the men of Israel said, "The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Achitophel;" and when Achitophel saw that his measures were not adopted, he in a season of pride and frantic desperation, put an end to his own life. But surely there is no express resemblance between suicide and the maledictions contained in the 109th Psalm. Others again would apply the words of the Psalm to Doeg, and as I think without sufficient evidence from sacred history. Doeg, no doubt, had endeavoured to exasperate the mind of Saul, by telling him that David had occasioned the death of all the persons of his father's house. David too was well aware of the machinations which this wicked man was carrying on against him. But this false and slanderous charge bears very little proportion, and has very little similitude to the particulars enumerated in the Psalm; and upon the specific nature of the punishment which Doeg incurred for having slain the priests of the Lord, because their hands were with David, the historian is silent. Let us not forget too that if David had in his own person, and from the dictates of his own mind pointed such curses against Doeg or Achitophel, he would stand

exposed to that very charge of indulging a vindictive spirit from which I would endeavour to vindicate him; and if it be said that the words instead of being maledictory contain only a prediction or even a description, the obvious and direct answer is, that the numerous and striking particulars contained in either are not related, nor even intimated, in the account which the Jewish historian has given of their respective doom. Others have been led to imagine that Judas, and with him the Jews or posterity of the Jews, who crucified our blessed Redeemer, are prefigured. Now if we except those phrases, in which the widow and fatherless children are described as vagabonds, and which by a loose and forced interpretation have been ascribed to the wandering state of the Jews after the destruction of their city by the Romans, there is no other appropriate circumstance of resemblance between their sufferings, and the supposed prophecy.

As however part of the words cited by David are cited and applied in the Acts of the Apostles—as the application too has been insisted upon by some pious men—as even the learned Mattei tells us that the greatest part of the difficulties which perplexed his mind arose from a passage in the Acts—the subject deserves to be accurately considered. David does complain of slanderous enemies. But that he intentionally even alluded to Judas is no where expressly declared, and the notion itself has I think been entirely confuted by a very judicious commentator of our own country, whose words I will lay

before you. "It is certain that St. Peter, speaking of Judas and his death, Acts 1st chap. 20th verse, has cited a passage from this Psalm: 'for it is written in the Psalms, let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein—and his bishoprick let another take.' It is certain, too, that both these citations are taken from the Psalms. The first from the 69th Psalm, 25th verse. The other from the 109th Psalm, 8th verse. But that the Apostle meant no more than a mere accommodation appears from hence, that in the first the words are changed from the plural to the singular number: *his* is put for *their*: *therein* is put for *in their tents*, besides some other less variations. In the latter citation that which is recited as an imprecation against the Psalmist himself, is applied to the case of Judas." The reasons which Dr. Sykes gives, and to which I assent, for supposing the imprecation to be pointed against the Psalmist himself, will be hereafter considered. But to whomsoever they were applied, they are suited to the principle of accommodation, and as to the reality of that principle, it is admitted by all learned men. Now, if upon the present occasion we exclude the rule of accommodation, and contend for a direct and unequivocal prophecy, how shall we account for the change of number and of terms too? What fact is there recorded in the New Testament, which shews the habitation of Judas to have been desolate, and for no man to have dwelt therein? and this I ask, because in respect to the second passage, we do read in the New Testament that another filled the office of Judas. If

then the words of the 69th Psalm cannot be proved to be strictly prophetical, why should we say that the quotation from the 109th Psalm is to be so considered? And plain it is that St. Peter, who cites both, makes no distinction between them, as being descriptive in one place, and prophetic in another. Again, if the prophecy were meant by David to describe the case of Judas, whence is it that the parallel should hold only in one particular, itself not very striking, and fail in so many others, which are evidently more striking? Whence is it that the sacred writers, who look with detestation upon the treachery of Judas, should upon no other occasion give us any other notice that his crime and his punishment had been distinctly foreseen, and explicitly foretold by the inspired Psalmist? On the supposition of a real prophecy, these difficulties seem insuperable, while on the principle of accommodation, they admit an easy, clear, and complete solution. I think therefore with Mr. Pyle, one of our best commentators upon holy writ, that the interpretation proposed by Dr. Sykes is just. Mattei tells us that, not choosing to rely upon his own opinion in a matter so delicate, he consulted the great theologian Mingorelli, and that by Mingorelli he was encouraged to adhere firmly to the interpretation of Marino, as strictly conformable to that of Peter. He did not trouble himself to demonstrate strictly that such imprecations were directed by David against Judas; but said that the Scripture was to be fulfilled as to the prophecy of David. Now it must be observed that David, after relating

these imprecations of his enemies, adds that God would not hear them, but cause their revilings to fall on themselves. Hoc opus eorum qui maledicebant mihi, or as St. Jerome translates, hæc retributio eorum. Behold then the fulfilling of Scripture which St. Peter pointed out: this is the prophecy of David, which was verified in Judas." Here I must stop to remark, that Mattei, Mingorelli, and Marino, all agree in thinking the imprecation directed, not by David against his foes, but by those foes against David. They allow, however, a prophecy, but do not state whether it was direct or indirect; and yet I cannot suppose them to have meant a direct prophecy, because they in substance hold the very same language with Sykes, who openly and unequivocally has recourse to the well known practice of the sacred writers upon other occasions, in accommodating the words of a prophetical writer to events not in the strict and full sense of the words really prophesied. Mattei thus proceeds. "That St. Peter regarded the *sense* rather than the exact words is manifest from this, that he has united two verses of two different Psalms. When therefore he said, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, 'his bishoprick let another take,' he did not mean that the Holy Spirit directed these words precisely against Judas, but he foretold that these words uttered by others should be fulfilled by Judas, as if he had more clearly said that the Scripture must be fulfilled, 'his bishoprick let another take,' which (that is, fulfilling of the Scriptures)

the Holy Spirit foretold of Judas by the mouth of David. This is the work of them who speak against me."* That St. Peter regarded the sense rather the exact words—that he united two verses of two different Psalms—that he did not mean to point out that the Holy Spirit directed these words precisely against Judas, is the language of a man whose mind was reasoning upon the principle of accommodation, though for reasons of prudence or decorum he might be unwilling to employ the term.

But throwing aside for a moment all unquiet remembrance of all controverted interpretation, let us attend to the very words of the New Testament. Does St. Peter say it is prophesied in the book of the Psalms? He does not. Does he employ any additional term intimating a prophecy? He does not. What then is the word used by him? It is written. Does that word in quotations from the Old Testament always imply prediction? It does not; for we read, "It is written in your law, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery." Are we not assisted by the context in judging sometimes whether a prediction be, or be not employed? We are. Will the context here in the passage before us admit a convenient sense, from which prophecy is excluded? It does. Can we reasonably suppose that St. Peter, in citing these two passages from the Psalms, meant to apply them for the purpose of illustration, just as we should ourselves employ some apposite and luminous expressions in quoting from a profane author terms we may adapt to some

* Quoted from the Notes in Partridge's Sermon.

subject, which he had not in view? In my opinion we can. St. Peter you see simply says, "It is written in the book of Psalms," and this was said justly, because the words are to be found there, and it might be said pertinently by St. Peter, if he designed not to insist upon a prophecy, but to accommodate the mere words of a prophet to an event neither predicted nor even known by that prophet; and I add, that it might be said very forcibly, if the purpose of St. Peter was, what I suppose it to have been, to have deeply impressed the guilt of Judas upon the minds of his hearers. In this view of the words St. Peter employs two passages, one more luminous and direct than the other, in shewing that the office of an Apostle, which Judas once filled, ceased to be filled by him. And here too, we must allow some latitude to the signification of the Apostle's words, for in reality another did take his bishoprick; and at the same time we cannot say literally that no man dwelt in his tents or his habitations, if tents or habitations were intended to be descriptive of his office. It may be observed, by the way, that if the word ἀπήγξατο, as it is commonly, be also rightly interpreted, "he hanged himself," there might be some resemblance between the fate of Achitophel and the fate of Judas. But for reasons which it were unnecessary to state here, I hold with Perizonius and other learned men, that the word is wrongly translated, and means suffocation from extreme sorrow. Achitophel was guilty of suicide; Judas probably was not; and that the words in the 109th Psalm are not applicable to Achitophel is a

point which I have already endeavoured to establish by various arguments, and partly, too, from that very circumstance of self-murder, which has been urged in favour of the resemblance between Achitophel and Judas.

I am solicitous to remove all doubts from your minds upon the meaning of St. Peter's words, and therefore I think it right not entirely to pass over that part of the supposed prediction in which we read "let another take his bishoprick." The word bishop implies the office of one who is to watch, and who is invested with authority. Thus, when Cicero was employed by Pompey to watch over the sea-coast of Italy, he calls himself the Bishop or Overseer. "Vult enim me Pompeius esse, quem tota hæc Campana et maritima ora habeat ἐπίσκοπον."* Mercury, whose statue was placed over a school of exercise, was called the Overseer, ἐστῶτε τῶνδε γυμνασίων ἐπίσκοπον. In Callimachus we read of Diana,

καὶ γὰρ ἀγυίαις
ἔσσῃ καὶ λιμένεσσιν ἐπίσκοπον.

And Solon, quoted by Demosthenes, in Orat. de Falsa Legatione, τοίη γὰρ μεγάθυμος ἐπίσκοπος, κ. τ. λ.† They who among the Greeks had the care of the public games were called ἐπίσκοποι.‡ The officers whom the Athenians sent yearly to examine the condition of the cities, which were subjected to them, bore the same appellation. §

* Ad. Attic. lib. vii. epist. 11.
† P. 421, edit. Reiske.
‡ See Pollux.
§ See Suidas, in voce ἐπίσκοπος.

The act of visiting is expressed by a similar word, when some aid was to be given, and some favour to be conferred; and hence we read in Luke 19th, "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation;" and though in all these instances it has a favourable sense, yet in Greek it is applied sometimes, and in our own language it is more generally applied to events in which the justice of God inflicts punishment upon offenders. The Hebrew words would be *pequidelu*,* his bishoprick, and so it is translated by the seventy. But the term is sometimes used of those who fill inferior offices, as in Numbers, 4th chap. 16th verse. Eleazer, who had the care of the oil for the lamp, is described by this word. Applied to the Apostles, it signifies, no doubt, a much higher degree of dignity. It were however to be wished, that in expressing the sacred office once holden by Judas, it were expressed in our version by some term less equivocal. Be this as it may, there is nothing in one solitary passage, which can justify us in affirming that the long train of maledictions contained in the 109th Psalm was intended by the writer as a strict and immediate prophecy concerning Judas, and therefore, without the smallest imputation of rashness, we may explain the words of St. Peter, as I have again and again said, by the principle of accommodation. The memory of every Jew was furnished with the phraseology of the Psalm, and his imagination I should think must have been powerfully affected by it. The mind of every Christian convert was fraught with

* See Parkhurst, in voce piqued.

indignation against the perfidy of Judas. Hence the application of such marked phraseology to such a marked offender, becomes perspicuous, apposite, and emphatical. But that application, though argumentative or ornamental, is not historical, and it leaves us at liberty to look out for some other person to whom the language of the Psalmist was primarily, or more directly pointed. I shall therefore, employ that exposition which, after much inquiry and much reflection, appears to me the most probable and most instructive.

By those who hold David to have written only seventy-two Psalms in our present collection, it has been said that the 109th Psalm was composed by Melchisedek. Scarcely possible it is, that for this there could be any other evidence than vague, and perhaps late tradition; and probable it is, that those who adopted it were anxious to secure David from the reproach of maledictions, which more feebly affected the credit of Melchisedek, who lived in an age so very remote. My own conviction, however, from internal evidence, is, that David is the real author of that Psalm; and with that conviction deeply fixed upon my mind, I shall now enter upon the explanation of various passages contained in it.* The Psalm opens thus—"Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise, (or rather, O God, my praise,) for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me in a lying tongue." Hold not thy peace is equivalent to the interposition of the Deity for the aid, or

* See Calmet about Melchisedek.

the defence of others. Thus in Psalm the 28th we read, "Unto thee will I cry aloud, O Lord my rock, —be not silent to me, lest if thou be silent to me (that is, lest if thou interpose not to serve me) I become like unto them that go down into the pit."

The Psalm thus proceeds—"They compassed me about also with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause: for my love they are mine adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer. They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love." Here we have the distinct and express mention of other persons as encompassing David with words of hatred, and of David as giving himself unto prayer. After these complaints of wrongs, and after an appeal to the Deity in prayer for that protection which conscious innocence alone could have induced David to expect, the language on a sudden changes, and according to the common conceptions of men, David pours forth words of hatred—exchanges his love towards his adversaries of which he had been speaking for revenge—gives himself no longer unto prayer, but unto cursing, and this too in the very presence of heaven, and as it should seem, with undisguised wishes—with unqualified entreaties—with most ardent expectation, that the uplifted arm of Omnipotence itself should be employed in executing all the tremendous judgments which he was about to enumerate. "Set thou," says the 6th verse in our Translation, "an ungodly man to be ruler over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand."* Some understand the first part of the verse thus—"Give

* See the Chaldee, Seventy, and Syriac.

the wicked man charge over him," but they rather mean, "Let a wicked prefect, or judge, be over him," because by such a person he will surely be condemned whether innocent or guilty. The word Satan,* in this and many other places, implies not that evil spirit who, according to the general notions of Christians is, in the New Testament, called the Devil,† but an adversary or accuser in a court of law, who, according to the Jewish forms of judicature, stood on the right hand of the accused; and thus we read in the New Testament, "Agree quickly with thine adversary, while thou art in the way with him." In the next verse the allusion, as in the foregoing, is to legal processes: "When sentence is given upon him, let him be condemned, and let his prayer be turned into sin." The meaning of the last clause may be thus unfolded. Under impending dissolution it was the practice of the Jews to utter this short prayer—"Let my death be an expiation for all my offences." Such a prayer was used even when men died by the common course of nature; but it became more proper and more emphatical when they fell by the hand of justice. And that the last prayer of a man should become a sin—that his patient submission to a sentence, instead of expiating his former offences, should constitute a new offence—that the very means he employed to avert the displeasure of God should make him incur it more grievously, is a state most deplorable; and to

* For Satan, or Adversary, see page 413, vol. ii. of Chandler's Life of David.

† Ἀντίδικος, διάβολος.

wish that an enemy, justly or unjustly condemned, should ever be placed in such a state, implies the most inveterate and most determined hatred. Who does not weep for the dying malefactor, when ingenuously and contritely he acknowledges his guilt; and who does not join in his dying prayer, that the forfeiture of his life may in some degree be an atonement for his sins?

"Let his days be few, and let another take his office." Here the same train of judicial ideas, which occurs in the former verse, yet continues. He is to perish before the natural period of his existence shall come—he is to be cut short by a legal sentence—he is to be deprived of all honours and all profits which belonged to the office he once filled, and the loss of which must have added fresh bitterness to the cup of death; and the other alarming effects of that sentence are, as we shall see presently, that his personal estate, as well as life, should be forfeited, and that his widow and children are to wander perpetually, or, as the original words, in a form often intended to be emphatical, imply, "by moving let them move."

The next verses are these—"Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow—let his children be vagabonds and beg their bread—let them seek it also out of desolate places." Possible it is, my hearers, that in some cases the public safety may require that the family of a traitor should be deprived of their inheritance; but the justice of forfeiture has been doubted by some of the ablest writers upon law, and though a severity of this kind may be employed

gravely and impartially by the authority of a judge, yet we should be terrified at the malignity of any private individual, who should boldly avow his desire that the weeping widow and the helpless orphan should suffer for the crimes of which they did not partake in thought, or word, or deed, and that they should be compelled to seek their inheritance in places where there is no inhabitant to pity or protect them—no home to shelter them—no hand to hold forth a morsel of bread or a cup of water when they shall be hungry and thirsty, and their souls shall be fainting within them. Ancient and frequent as may be the instances of forfeiture * among many oriental nations, where indeed the property of private individuals was generally protected by imperfect securities, it was always considered as an aggravation of punishment. But among the Jews, where property was more secured by the Mosaic law, and forfeiture for offences was less frequent, the wish contained in this Psalm included a much greater aggravation.

The Psalm thus proceeds—"Let the extortioner consume all that he hath, and let the stranger spoil his labour." The word rendered *consume* rather means "to catch," † to exact, to seize on, as a merciless creditor would seize upon the goods of his

* On the frequent use of forfeiture among the Chinese and other oriental nations, see what is copiously and learnedly written by my friend Edmund Henry Barker, in the Classical Recreations.

† In the Bible version the word is *catch*.

debtor." The latter part of the curse is very emphatical, for usury was expressly forbidden among the Jews; and therefore that a stranger, and that stranger a heathen, should catch the fruit of a man's labour, was a high exaggeration of the evil inflicted upon him.

"Let there be no man to pity him—none to have compassion on his fatherless children: let his posterity be destroyed; and in the next (or, as the original has it—in one,) generation let his name be clean put out: let the wickedness of his fathers be had in remembrance in the sight of the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be done away." In this malediction we have the traces of the Jewish notion, that the sins of the fathers were to be visited upon the children; and though in the Decalogue this punishment is denounced against the sin of idolatry, which under the peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation was indissolubly connected with rebellion, and led to the entire dissolution of the national polity, as well as the national religion; yet the wayward imaginations and the vindictive passions of men transferred the principle even to the transactions of private life, where, however, we have no Scriptural warrant for maintaining, in any one instance, that the child by any extraordinary and judicial dispensations of the Deity, really did suffer for the guilt of his parent.

In the 15th verse we read—"Let them alway be before the Lord, that he may root out the memorial of them from off the earth." Here, according to the opinion of Mr. Peters, the direct process of execration ceases; though Dr. Sykes and other learned

men, for reasons which do not quite satisfy me, would carry them on to the 20th verse.

Now I think this a proper place for stating to you the history of that interpretation, which transfers the offensive maledictions from David to some other person. It was first suggested in a sermon by Mr. Peters, the celebrated author of a Critical Dissertation on the Book of Job. Afterwards Dr. Sykes,* in the Preface to his Paraphrase and Notes upon the Epistle to the Hebrews,† fell into the same train of reasoning; and as he does not avail himself of the authority which the name of Mr. Peters would give to any theological opinion, and as the Sermon of Mr. Peters was not published when the work of Dr. Sykes, just now mentioned, came from the press, it is highly probable that he was not aware of the fact. Mr. Keate, too, who sent forth a most useful Sermon upon this Psalm in 1794, does not appear to have seen what had been written by Mr. Peters. Mattei,‡ a learned Italian, afterwards published a similar interpretation of the curses, and this, too, without appearing to have known what had been previously done by our own pious and learned countryman, Mr. Peters. That these excellent men, without communication, should have been led to the same view of the subject, is no doubt a striking circumstance, and may be well considered as a strong presumption in favour of their respective opinions. Assuming

* See page 32 of the Introduction.

† Published in 1755.

‡ See Notes to a Sermon published by the Rev. Mr. Partridge of Boston.

for the present, then, that the curses terminate in verse 15, and reserving another part of this discourse what I think a right interpretation of the Psalm from that verse to verse the 20th, I shall resume my own interpretation.

The 16th and 17th verses, according to our translation of the Bible, go on thus—" Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come upon him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him." Having noticed briefly, what hereafter I shall have occasion to consider more particularly, the sudden transition of the Psalmist to the singular number, according to our own Version, I will observe, that agreeably to the common interpretation of the Psalm, David must be supposed to assign his reasons for the preceding curses, and that those reasons are professedly founded upon a principle of revenge and retaliation. But granting that any human being *had* persecuted the poor and helpless man—that his delight *was* in cursing—that he delighted *not* in blessing—could any man be justified in looking up to heaven, and in praying that an ungodly man should judge the cause of his foe—that the very prayer uttered by his dying lips should become a sin—that his fatherless children and his widowed wife should be vagabonds and beg their bread—that the extortioner should seize all that he hath, and the usurious stranger should spoil his labour—that there should be no man to have compassion upon him, or his widow and his unoffending

orphans—that his very posterity should be destroyed —that even in one generation his name should be put out—that the wretchedness of his fate, and the sin of his mother should always be before the Lord? No, the natural sentiments of the human heart revolt from such a supposition; for it implies a degree of guilt equalling what the very worst men, from the very worst motives, and in possession of the greatest power for doing the very worst mischief, ever inflicted upon their fellow-creatures. It ascribes to the Deity himself what, in the ordinary course of human affairs, nearly the wickedest of men would blush to avow of themselves—what they would view with anguish if suffered by other men —what they would condemn in the most pointed terms of abhorrence, if perpetrated by other men against themselves.

My hearers, violent as may have been the emotions, virulent as may have been the invectives, and ferocious as may have been the menaces of enraged and vindictive men, the Psalm which we are now considering as generally, but erroneously understood, may find one, and for the honour of our nature I would hope only one parallel, in which malediction is accumulated upon malediction; and in order to deepen the horror which must be excited in your bosoms by the recital of what you read in the Scriptures, I will lay before you some striking parts of those curses which occur in a human composition, and contain the most melancholy proof of the extravagances into which the human mind may sometimes be seduced by pride, or precipitated by rage.

"May God the Father, who created man, God the Son, who suffered for man, and the Holy Spirit, which is poured forth in baptism, curse him.—May the holy cross, which Christ, triumphing over death, ascended for our salvation; may the holy Virgin Mary; may the holy Michael, the conductor of the souls of the blessed; may all the angels and archangels, and the principalities and powers, and the whole army of heaven curse him.—May the sacred hosts of patriarchs and prophets; may John the precursor of Christ; may the holy Peter, Paul, Andrew, and all the other Apostles of Christ, and his disciples, and the four Evangelists, who by their preaching have converted the world; may the wonderful troop of martyrs and confessors, who by their good works are pleasing in the sight of God; may all the saints, who from the beginning of the world even to the end thereof are found among the beloved of God; may the heavens, and the earth, and all things therein hallowed, curse him.—May he be cursed, whether he be in the house, or in the field, or in the wood, or in the waters, or in the sanctuary.—May he be cursed whether living or dying, whether he be hungry or thirsty, whether he be waking or asleep, whether he be walking or at rest; may he be cursed within and without; in all the powers and all the parts of the body, in the texture of his limbs, and from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet may there be no soundness."

Are you not shocked, my hearers, at the minuteness with which the human imagination expatiates upon a long and terrible succession of particulars—

at the eagerness with which the soul and body are thus devoted to perdition—at the presumption with which the most virtuous classes of men, the most exalted orders of angels and archangels, and even the Sanctifier of mankind, the Redeemer of mankind, the Creator of mankind, are invoked to pour down their curses upon an offender. Well may you ask when, and why, and where such a hideous composition derived its origin. It was written in a dark age of ignorance and superstition. It bears the awful name of an excommunication, and was meant as a formidable engine of spiritual tyranny. It is preserved among the records of an ancient and venerable cathedral in our own land;* and whether you read, or whether you hear it, be thankful to heaven that you live in a reformed Church, and an enlightened age, when no bigot, however famed for external sanctity—no persecutor, however armed with ecclesiastical power, could utter such imprecations without exciting the resentment, and the abhorrence of every devout fellow Christian, every civilized fellow-subject, and every humane fellow-creature.

In the course of your own experience many a serious and benevolent man among you must have been offended at the intemperate expressions, which fall from the lips of your fellow-creatures in the flutter of surprise, the agitation of fretfulness, the blind fury of wrath, or the gloomy and deliberate suggestions of revenge. But they fall very short

* See Textus Roffensis, p. 55, edited by Thom. Hearne, Oxford, 1720.

of the maledictions which, in the foregoing instance, were proposed by the members of a Christian priesthood; for they involve no wish of curses extended to the widow and the orphan. Hateful however as they are to the ears of man, and displeasing as they must be in the sight of God, they are far inferior in malignity and profaneness to those curses, which you read in the 109th Psalm, and from the imputation of which I will endeavour to rescue the character of David.

At the opening of the Psalm, David, you see, declares that the mouths of the wicked and the deceitful are opened against him—that they compassed him about with words of hatred—and fought against him without a cause. Here, you will observe, that he speaks of enemies in the plural, and that he imputes to them words of hatred, and therefore it is not very likely, that he should be in haste to commit the very fault which he had condemned. In the 4th verse he adds, "For my love (i. e. in return for the love I bear them) they are mine adversaries; but I give myself unto prayer." So deep and painful was his sense of their ingratitude, that he dwells upon it, and adds—they have rewarded evil for my good, and hatred for my love. Now, can we reasonably suppose that David, after professing to give himself unto prayer, should instantly abandon himself to deliberate and accumulated cursing? And yet in the very next verse such cursing begins, and continues in many succeeding verses. Where he speaks of those who rewarded him evil for good, and hatred for his love, he adverted, as I am quite

convinced, to his ungrateful and rebellious son, Absalom, and I do no violence to probability when I add, that among these adversaries were included many persons, to whom his royal favour had been extended, before they had taken up arms against him.

Dr. Sykes, not having been led to inquire who those enemies were, nor whether they are to be distinguished from the speaker, or speakers, introduced, writes thus:* "Take this psalm then, as containing a recital of the curses and imprecations of very slanderous men against the Psalmist himself exclusively, from v. 5th to the 20th, and all is clear. David says, v. 3, 'They compassed me about with words of hatred;' and v. 2, 'The mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.' And when he had urged his love and good actions to these enemies of his, v. 4, 5, then follow the evil wishes they expressed against him to v. 20." Mr. Peters, following not only the translation of the early bishops' Bible, retained in our Common Prayer Book, and differing very little from Coverdale's version; but the last translation also, which was professedly more adapted to the Hebrew text—Mr. Peters, I say, has particularly noticed, that at the opening of the malediction, v. 6, there is a sudden transition from the plural number, and that from this verse to the close of v. 16, the language of cursing is employed against one person only, and at the same time is not accompanied by

* P. xxxii. of the Introduction.

the language of accusation. Under a former head I have endeavoured to lay open the full import of those curses, and it now remains for me to produce and support the reasoning of Mr. Peters, who would separate that one person from the enemies generally mentioned in the course of the first five verses.

Now the Sacred History fortunately supplies us with numerous circumstances which may assist us in determining the particular enemy from whom these curses proceeded. That enemy I believe to be Shimei, and, in order to establish my position, I will explain to you his situation and his behaviour. Shimei belonged to the family of Saul—to the degraded family of a degraded king. He was a man of great power in the tribe of Benjamin, in so much, that after the victory of David over Absalom, and his return to Jerusalem, Shimei brought with him in his train a thousand followers. He shared very largely with Absalom in the guilt of that insurrection which had driven David from his palace; and it more especially deserves your notice, that the conduct of this traitor is peculiarly marked by the manner in which the rancour of his spirit broke forth in the bitterness of his words. When king David, we read, came to Bahurim—"behold, there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And thus said Shimei, when he cursed, Come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial; the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand

of Absalom, thy son; and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." Here it is proper for me to remark, that in order to point out the atrocity of murder, the plural is often used in Hebrew, *Demim*, bloods. Shimei, in the very curse against David, calls him "a man of bloods." In psalm 5th, verse the 6th, we read of "the man of bloods and deceit." In psalm the 51st, verse the 14th, "Deliver me from blood guiltiness," or "the guilt of bloods." In Proverbs the 29th, verse 10th, "the men of bloods" are described as hating the upright, and seeking the life of every just person. Now Absalom had most unnaturally rebelled against a father and a sovereign. Many of David's subjects and his servants had joined in the rebellion. But it was reserved for Shimei to insult David with the most unjust reproaches, and the most savage execrations.* Those reproaches, and those execrations, must have filled the soul of David with anguish, and from their pernicious effect upon the mind of the exasperated and depraved Absalom, and the other conspirators, they naturally rushed into the memory of the afflicted monarch, and led him to enumerate them, when he had thrown himself upon the protection of Almighty God. Strong also and just was the resentment which they had excited among the faithful adherents of David; for afterwards, when his arms were triumphant, Shimei, we read, "came down with the men of Judah to meet king David, and said to him—Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou re-

* See p. 263, vol. ii. of Chandler's Life of David.

member that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned; therefore, behold I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph, to go down to meet my lord the king. But Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, answered, and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" Other men, as Abishai knew, were traitors, and had received their pardon. But Shimei added cursing to treason, and therefore, in the estimation of Abishai, he was wholly unworthy of being pardoned.* Shimei him-

---

* So prominent is this feature of savage insolence in the character of Shimei, and so deep is the impression which it made on the mind of David, of his faithful subjects, and the sacred historian, that I think it incumbent upon me to explore very fully the nature and extent of that principle, by which the persons just now mentioned to you were actuated. He that denies the existence of that peculiar veneration, and peculiar pity, which nature has implanted in the heart of man towards sovereigns in distress, is a shallow philosopher, and he who, by delusive abstractions, or visionary refinements, would weaken their efficacy, is a mischievous member of society. Cicero, however, seems to have been a better statesman, and a better moralist than some luminaries of the modern school, where he describes the effects, which the defeat, the flight, and the perilous situation of Mithridates produced upon rival monarchs, suddenly disarmed of their jealousy, and the subjects of monarchs, as suddenly exchanging sullen fear for ardent good-will. "Hoc jam fere sic fieri solere accepimus, ut regum afflictæ fortunæ facile multorum opes alliciant ad misericordiam, maximeque eorum, qui reges sunt, aut vivant in regno, quod regale iis nomen magnum et sanctum esse videatur: ita-

self stood condemned by his own conscience for the peculiar wickedness of that cursing. He separated it from all other criminal overt acts of disobedience; he invested it with all its peculiar circum-

---

que tantum victus efficere potuit, quantum incolumis nunquam est ausus optare. (*Pro Lege Manilia*, viii. 51.) But what more especially deserves our notice is the lively sensibility of virtuous pride, when the same sentiment is imputed by us to other men, and in other men has been wounded. Kings may indeed be slain in battle, led away captive into foreign lands, deposed, and even in some cases destroyed by their own subjects, and yet we can often read of their misfortunes without very strong and painful emotions. But, if insult be added to injury, and in the giddiness of success the low and the worthless trample upon the mighty, the conscious dignity of human nature rushes upon our minds, and we become deeply interested in favour of those who have been hurled from the highest pinnacle of power, and stripped of the gorgeous emblems in which grandeur is wont to be arrayed. To this complex and vigorous sentiment in which reverence, placability, pity, the virtuous but subdued pride which often accompanies pity, and a latent, but awful sense of the instability of all human greatness are united, appeals are often made with the happiest effect by the sagacity of the historian, and the genius of the poet. Each selects the circumstances of external condition, in which the ordinary classes of mankind would be viewed with indifference, or contempt, and by contrasting those circumstances with the earlier and happier condition of the sufferer, each rouses our indignation against that indifference, and that contempt, where they are directed towards an object once contemplated with opposite and nobler feelings. The arrogance and ferocity of Achilles, which are accompanied by an agreeable perception of his valour and magnanimity in the hour of conflict with his rivals and his foes, would have excited even unmingled abhorrence, if he had spurned from him an aged father and a suppliant king. The indignities offered to the

stances of time and place, and assigned to it a name of severe reproach, "Remember not that which thy servant did *perversely* the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem." But when Shimei was

---

remains of Polynices affect us more powerfully than the loss of his kingdom, or his life, even though these calamities were inflicted upon him by the hand of a brother. The tale of monarchs, whose personal characters in seasons of prosperity were unworthy of our esteem, awakens commiseration, when we read that they were, by the decree of a Roman senate, dragged along the Sacred Way to grace the insolent and barbarous triumph of their conquerors. The dethronement, blindness, and imbecility of Lear become far more interesting to us, when his mind was pierced with the scorpion stings of mockery by a thankless and unfeeling child. The conspirators who planted the poniards in the breast of Julius Cæsar, did not presume to *insult* their breathless victim, and well did Antony display his deep knowledge of human nature in his selection of the topics, by which he stirred up the feelings of the Roman people in compassion to the slain, and in rage against the destroyers. Even in the seeming exceptions to the general rule, we may find circumstances, which completely account for the suspension of the feeling which we are now considering.

In order to make room for a distinction, which shall now be explained more particularly, I said that an historian or a poet would select circumstances from the *external* condition of great personages. Thus a king feeding on a very scanty and homely meal, cloathed day after day in ragged garments, and dwelling by compulsion in a squalid cottage, would excite the commiseration which we should not feel for a peasant. But that commiseration would not be experienced, if by a long series of extravagant follies, or by the undisguised commission of low vices, or a marked predilection for the society of base companions, he previously to his downfall, had forced his subjects to despise him. He that apparently has ceased to respect himself, will soon cease to be respected by others; and hence it is, that from

thus sensible of his own iniquity, when he knew the grief and the rage which the king must have felt from it—when he was aware that the affectionate friend and the trusty servants of David remembered

---

the violated sense of propriety and duty in our own minds, contempt is followed by effects more permanent, and more incurable than detestation or terror. The tyrant, Caligula, who exclaimed "Oderint, dum metuant," was not destitute of sagacity. While they who hate are accustomed also to fear, they may be expected to obey; but contempt soon dislodges fear, and, without the aid of hatred, will produce disobedience to authority, and apathy to misfortune. Contiguity in time is also another cause, which is well known to heighten our joys and sorrow, our love and hatred. It was the *recent* cruelty, and the recent arrogance of Jezabel, which reconciles us to her doom, when, in obedience to the command of Jehu, the eunuchs threw her out of the window, and she fell into the inclosure of the outward wall, where she was eaten by dogs, for the completion, as we know, of a prophecy; and yet Jehu himself soon relented, and exclaimed, "Go, see what is become of this unhappy woman, and bury her, for she is a king's daughter." It was the *fresh* remembrance of multiplied wrongs, which increased the joy of the Romans on the death of Tiberius—"Morte ejus ita lætatus est populus, ut ad primum nuntium discurrentes, pars Tiberium in Tiberim clamitarent, pars terram matrem deosque Manes orarent, ne mortuo sedem ullam nisi inter impios darent, alii uncum et Gemonias cadaveri minarentur, exacerbati super memoriam pristinæ crudelitatis, etiam *recenti* atrocitate." (Suetonius in *Vita*, c. 75.) It was in habits of domestic life, so debasing to the dignity of royalty, and in the degradation of cruelty itself, when extended to the lower classes of society, that we are to look for the causes, which excluded Domitian from pity—

"Sed periit, postquam cerdonibus esse timendus
"Cœperat: hoc nocuit Lamiarum cæde madenti."

There cannot indeed be a more striking argument for shew-

it with honest indignation, would he have ventured into the presence of an offended, but victorious king; or would he have brought down with him Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fif-

---

ing the energy of the principle which I am now explaining, than were the mixed effects that followed the death of this tyrant—"Occisum eum populus indifferenter, miles gravissime tulit, statimque eum *Divum* appellare conatus est; paratus et ulcisci, nisi duces defuissent; quod quidem paullo post fecit, expostulatis ad poenam pertinacissime cædis auctoribus; contra Senatus adeo lætatus est, ut repleta certatim curia non temperaret, quin mortuum contumeliosissimo atque acerbissimo acclamationum genere laceraret; scalas etiam inferri, clypeosque et imagines ejus coram detrahi, et ibidem solo affligi juberet; novissime eradendos ubique titulos, abolendamque omnem memoriam decerneret." (Suetonius in *Vita*, c. 23.) It requires that pure, and delicate, and well-poised state of the affections, which belongs to the contemplative few alone, that amidst our contempt for the follies, and our abhorrence of the crimes of Nero, we can find room for compassion on reading that, when his murderers approached, he tremblingly exclaimed, ἵππων μ' ὠκυπόδων ἀμφὶ κτύπος οὔατα βάλλει, and that to the Centurion, who threw his garment over the bleeding wounds, and professed to have come to the aid of his master, he uttered these dying words, "Sero, hæc est fides!" We, at this distance of time, look with horror upon the enormities which he perpetrated; but his subjects were not all of them actuated by the same emotions—"Tantumque gaudium publice præbuit, ut plebs pileata tota urbe discurreret, et tamen non defuerunt, qui per longum tempus vernis æstivisque floribus tumulum ejus ornarent; ac modo imagines prætextatas in Rostris proferrent, modo edicta, quasi viventis, et brevi magno amicorum malo reversuri." (Suetonius in *Vita*, c. 56.) Now of the different manners in which the misfortunes of a king, and a subject are viewed, we shall have a most decisive proof, if we contrast the fall of Sejanus with that of Nero. We have seen from the historian that pity and respect were

teen sons with him, if he had not been taught by early experience to confide in the placability of David? Would he have cherished the slightest hope of pardon, or relied upon the merits of recent sub-

---

by some persons expressed towards their slaughtered king; but what says the poet of the sentiment excited by the violent death of the favourite?

"Sed quid
Turba Remi? sequitur fortunam, ut semper, et odit
Damnatos; idem populus, si Nurtia Tusco
Favisset, si oppressa foret secura senectus,
Principis, hac ipsa Sejanum diceret hora
Augustum." Juv. Sat. x. 72.

Even the fickleness justly ascribed to popular feeling rarely makes a whole people obdurate to the distresses of their sovereigns. In the hour of prosperity Sejanus and Nero might alike have been flattered; but in the hour of adversity the one found some to pity, while no man shed a tear for the other. Turning, however, from ancient times to events recorded in the history of our own country, let us recollect what we experience in our own bosoms, when majesty is at once overtaken by disaster, and assaulted by contumely. When Edward the Second is compelled to employ the water of a chill and muddy stream for purposes of cleanliness, and after fruitless remonstrance his cheeks are bedewed with tears — when Richard the Second, "ere he shook off the regal thoughts, with which he had reigned," finds not truth in one of the twelve thousand who sometime cried to him, "All hail!" when, as he is led through the streets of the capital, "men's eyes do scowl upon him," when no man cries "God save him," and

"When rude misgovern'd hands, from window's tops,
Throw dust and rubbish on King Richard's head;"—

when, at a later period, Charles the First is insulted by the brutal soldiery, and the smell of a weed known to be offensive to him is impudently and cruelly forced upon his senses, then it

mission, or risked the forfeit of his life to the laws, if he had supposed that David had really uttered such imprecations against his enemies, as, according to any other interpretation of the text of the psalm than that which I propose, are contained in it? No, he would have expected his *own* days to be few; he would have expected another to take his *own* office; he would have expected his *own* wife to be a widow, his *own* children to be vagabonds, and beg their bread, his *own* posterity to be destroyed, and in the next generation his *own* name to be clean put out.

But in order to fix upon Shimei yet more deeply

---

is that we are instantaneously and irresistibly overpowered by unmingled compassion for the sufferings of fallen royalty—then it is that, according to the power of sympathy, as beautifully illustrated by a philosopher of our own times, we enter into all the complicated, and all the agitated feelings of personages, who, having been entitled and accustomed to receive the marked expressions of homage in every gesture, word, and tone, from subjects of every age, every sex, and every class, are, upon a reverse of fortune, buffeted and despitefully treated by the meanest kind, and the vilest ruffian—then it is that even they, who contend for the necessity of rigorous punishment, disdain to palliate outrageous contumely—then it is that the greater part of mankind shrink from justice herself in her sterner form, and through the medium of their imagination and affections, contemplate her under the milder features of mercy—then it is that we lose sight of every infirmity that *once* disgusted, every wrong that irritated, every crime that alarmed us; and borne away by tumultuous and honest indignation, we call down from heaven the avenging thunderbolt upon the head of the triumphant and ruthless oppressor. Similar were the feelings of those, who were earwitnesses of the bitter and scornful taunts, which Shimei levelled against his royal master in a season of humiliating and mortifying adversity.

the crime of cursing his king, and thus to increase the probability that David in the 109th psalm alludes to this fact, I will produce a third instance, which plainly shews that the sacred historian was anxious to preserve the memory of this notorious, and prominent, and peculiar wickedness in Shimei. You have heard his cruel execrations, and his lying words, when, upon David's going down to Bahurim, he called him "a man of blood." You have heard the eagerness of Abishai for him to be put to death, when the king had passed over Jordan. You shall now hear the direct testimony of David himself; for when he was at the point of death, and was giving his last serious instructions to Solomon upon the administration of his government, he says, (c. 2. Kings book i.), "Behold, thou hast with thee Shimei, the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim." Here you discern the lasting grief and terror, which had been impressed upon the mind of David by the curses of Shimei; and here too let me stop to vindicate the conduct of David from undeserved censure. Of David we have been told by a celebrated and subtle sceptic, that when he lay on his death-bed, where all mankind resign their resentments and animosities, his latest breath was employed in dictating a posthumous murder to his own son Solomon. But what says the sacred text, "Thou hast with thee Shimei, who cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim; but I swore to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the

sword. Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless, for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood." Now, from these words I should infer, not any change in the mind of David from clemency to cruelty, but the secret perseverance of Shimei's mind in rebellion and unthankfulness. If Shimei, by repentance, were a safe subject, the direction given to Solomon was unnecessary; but if he retained his evil disposition, and was secretly on the watch for an opportunity to dethrone the son of David, and to restore the family of Saul, it was a direction most justifiable in David, both as a father, and as a king. The claim of David's descendants was not yet supported by a long train of successors; the brothers of Solomon were secretly inclined to dispute his pretensions. Solomon himself was young and unexperienced; some of Saul's kindred were yet living; many of their adherents were not yet reconciled to their exclusion from the throne. Shimei was related to them in blood, and attached to them by his earlier habits of thought and action; and surely, under all these circumstances, David was well warranted in giving a caution to Solomon against a subject so dangerous, and perhaps incorrigible.

But the words themselves have been translated differently from what you read in your Bible, and in one instance I think more judiciously. Coccius translates the words—"Ne sinas eum liberum abire." Others are of opinion that parallel passages quoted would justify us in rendering the

words, "Bring down his grey hairs *for* blood." "A man," says Chandler (in page 471), "is said to be *in* blood when he has been guilty of murder. Thus Joab smote Abner, and he died *Bedem*, 'propter sanguinem,' or, as we render it, for shedding the blood of Asahel his brother." * Some writers in the General Dictionary, under the article of David, give another turn to the words. "They," says Chandler, "would have the middle words put into a parenthesis, and the negative particle *al*, repeated in the last clause from the first, 'Now, therefore, do not hold him guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him, but do not bring down his hoary head with blood.'" He, in a note, gives the judgment of the learned Houbigant—"Intelligitur ex ipso facto Solomonis, quale fuerit Davidis mandatum, atque id mandatum tale est, Et si ego Semei reo peperci, tu tamen eidem, si adhuc reus erit, non parces; expectavit Solomon donec Semei reus esset, ut eum morte plecteret, quo significatur servasse Davidem juramenti sui religionem, neque Solomoni filio imperasse, ut in Semei animadverteret pro sceleribus iisdem, quæ David Semei condonarat." Now Chandler afterwards suggests that the Hebrew particle *vau* has been some how or other transposed. Such too was the opinion of Dean Delany; and I must confess that to me it appears very probable, and therefore I shall endeavour to elucidate, and to confirm it. Chandler quotes from Isaiah, chapter 42, "My glory will I not give to another, neither

* See Samuel, book ii. c. 3. v. 32.

my power to golden images." Here the word translated "neither" is "and," which is employed to couple *not* one *word* with another, but one *proposition* with another—"I will not give my glory to another"—"And I will not give my power to golden images." So again in Jeremiah, c. 10, v. 20. "There is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains," where the meaning is, "And there is none to set up my curtains." So in Numbers 23, v. 19, our translation is, "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent." Here too the word translated "neither" means "and," and the sense is, "God is not a man that he should lie; and he is not a son of man that he should repent." Thus in Kings, book i. c. 2, v. 9, "Now, therefore, hold him not guiltless; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him, and *do not* bring down his hoar head to the grave with blood—watch him, restrain him so that it be not necessary for thee to slay him: but in the case of Joab, do according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. And here you will observe the first precept is positive, and in the second the negative particle is necessarily expressed. Thus Solomon evidently understood the meaning of his father; for he without hesitation *did* put Joab to death, and for the reason which the father suggested, because he had slain "two captains of the host of Israel, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether, shedding the blood of war in peace." (Kings i. c. 2, v. 5.) But

he did *not* slay, nor does there seem to have been any necessity for his slaying Shimei, whose crime was he hoped less heinous than that of Joab, and who, after having been spared by David according to his promise, was, by David's direction to be watched, but not destroyed, till by a new crime he should deserve new punishment.

In fact, therefore, David virtually prohibits, instead of enjoining the death of Shimei, and the conduct of Solomon was strictly conformable both to the prohibition thus explained, and to the caution which preceded it. When David had spoken of his own fidelity to his own oath, given after the actual, and the detested guilt of Shimei, can we believe that he would instruct Solomon not merely to watch, not merely to restrain, but to destroy him upon the bare presumption of future guilt, anticipated by David, and to be visited with the same punishment by Solomon, which would have been due to it, if realized? Whatever difficulties there may be in translating the text, the *facts* related in Sacred History clearly point out the sense in which David's words were understood, and, as I have before stated to you, obeyed by Solomon himself—he considered them as a warning *only*, he did *not* bring down the hoary head of Shimei to the grave with blood, or for blood. He only ordered him to build a house for himself at Jerusalem, where he might be under the inspection of his sovereign. He confined him to that house—he bound him by an oath never to go farther from it than to the brook Kidron—and knowing his talent

for intrigue, and his disposition for mischief, he told him that whenever he passed the brook he should surely die. The necessity of these precautions arose, you see, from that stubborn malignity of spirit which had urged Shimei upon a former occasion to pour forth the curses alluded to in the Psalm now under consideration. It might have been urged that, if David had ordered Solomon to put Shimei to death upon bare suspicion, the same malevolence might have made him capable of uttering the imprecations we read in the 109th Psalm. But if my criticism upon words, and my reasoning upon facts, disprove the reality of that order, they also lessen the probability that such curses had been levelled by David against Shimei, or any other adversary.

Having before explained to you my grounds for maintaining that David had Shimei in view, and was only repeating the substance of Shimei's words, I will now state to you the manner in which the different parts of the Psalm ought, in my opinion, to be divided and applied.

In the five first verses David enumerates generally the false accusations and base unthankfulness of his enemies, and then, by a form of composition which occurs in the best writers of antiquity, where the narrative is suddenly changed for recital, and where description assumes the character of imitation, he sets before us the very language of one, and that one his fiercest enemy. This interpretation is in strict conformity to a very frequent usage in the Psalms, and with reason it is that Dr. Sykes tells us,

(in page xxxii,) "Had the word *saying* been inserted in a different character at the beginning of verse 6th of that Psalm, the design and meaning of the whole had been easy." Mr. Peters* adduces the following examples in Psalm ii. v. 2.—"The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed; let us break their bonds asunder;" where the words "let us break their bonds asunder," are the speech of the kings and rulers mentioned before; and yet there are no such words as *they say* inserted to give us notice of it. It is added, indeed, in the last Bible translation, to make the sense more clear, but it is not in the old translation, nor yet in the Hebrew. So Psalm xxii. v. 7, 8.—"All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in God that he would deliver him." The word *saying* is not in the Hebrew, but is added by the translators to shew the meaning of the passage in a better light. So again Psalm xli. 7, 8.—"All that hate me whisper together against me; against me do they devise my hurt: an evil disease (say they) cleaveth fast unto him, and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more." Where the words *say they* are added by the translators; for they are not in the Hebrew, neither are they in the Old Translation of the Psalms, which you have in your Common Prayer Books, and where it runs thus:—"All mine enemies whisper together against me, even against me do they imagine this evil: let the sentence of guiltiness pro-

* Sermon XVII. p. 358. London, 1776.

ceed against him; and now that he lieth let him rise up no more." To these I would add three other instances, in two of which the last translators of the Bible have not, but in the third of which they have inserted the explanatory word *saying*. Psalm cxxxii. v. 1. " Lord, remember David and all his afflictions: how he sware unto the Lord and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed: I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." Again, in the eleventh verse, " The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony, that I shall teach them, their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore." Again, the 137th Psalm, verse 3—" For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us, required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." The foregoing examples will assist your memory, and, I hope, convince your judgment upon the reality of the ellipsis; and therefore you may in future read the Psalm thus—" They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love, *saying*, Set thou an ungodly man to be ruler over him." I suppose, with Peters, that the imprecations are not to be continued beyond the close of the 15th verse. The five following verses run thus in your Prayer Books, nor is there in our last version more than one variation, which materially affects the pre-

sent question—"Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and helpless man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As (or because) his delight was in cursing, so it shall come upon him; he loved not blessing, therefore shall it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing as with a garment, so it shall come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. It shall be unto him like the cloke that he hath upon him, and as the girdle that he is always girded withal. This shall be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord, and of them that speak evil against my soul."

It is supposed, as I have told you, by Dr. Sykes, that the imprecations of David's enemies, or, as I should say, of his enemy Shimei, are carried on through the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th verses, and that David himself in the 20th says, "Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord." He probably was led into this opinion by the words—"Let cursing come unto him—let blessing be far from him—let cursing come into his bowels like water." But surely if David stands acquitted of uttering these imprecations against his enemies, yet we must allow that he holds a language of angry retaliation, when by the concession of Dr. Sykes himself, and of those who think with him, David in verse the 20th says, "Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord." Now we have the authority of the learned Dr. Kennicott for maintaining, that there is no word directly expressive of a wish in the Hebrew. In the 20th verse, and the same may with equal propriety

be said of the four preceding verses, the punctuation of the close of verse the 16th should be altered, and then we may follow Peters in his representation of the passage—" because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and helpless man, that he might even slay the broken in heart; as (i. e. *because)* his delight was in cursing, so it shall come upon him: he loved not blessing, therefore it shall be far from him. As he cloathed himself with cursing as with a garment, so shall it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. It shall be unto him as the cloke that he hath upon him, and as the girdle that he is always girded withal." Here let it be observed that Peters, when he uses the word *shall,* agrees with the translation in your Prayer Book, but disagrees with the last version, where we find, " *Let* cursing be." To me it appears that David, remembering the curses which Shimei cast upon him, *imagines,* but *not wishes,* that by the righteous judgment of God, the maledictions pointed against himself would fall upon the head of his accuser. He speaks, you see, here in the singular number, of one enemy, " because that enemy remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and helpless man, that he might even slay the broken in heart; because his delight was in cursing, therefore it shall come upon him; because he loved not blessing, therefore it shall be far from him; as (or, because,) he clothed himself with cursing as with a garment, so (or therefore) shall it come into his bowels like water, or like oil,

which is yet more penetrating than water,* into his bones. Let me further remark, that the expression of a "poor and helpless man broken in heart," seems far less applicable to Shimei, or any other adversary of David than to David himself; that towards the close of the Psalm, where it is agreed by all Commentators that David speaks in his own person, he mentions *himself* as helpless and poor, and his heart as wounded within him; and that this deep and poignant affliction arose from the invectives of Shimei, the revolt of many of his subjects, and the rebellion of Absolom.

I must press upon your notice, that whether you do, or do not consider the maledictions as continued to the close of the 19th verse, yet in the verses which succeed the 15th, where I believe those maledictions to close, the Psalmist perseveres in using the singular number, first employed in verse the 6th, where the curses begin. But in those parts which follow the 20th verse, and which are to be ascribed to David as expressing his own sentiments, the plural number, used in the opening of the Psalm, and preserved to the conclusion of the 5th verse, is resumed. At the beginning, therefore, and at the end of the Psalm, David speaks generally of enemies—speaks of them so as to describe the accusations they had brought and the injuries they had done against himself—speaks of them, I intreat you to observe, in terms of bitter reproach, but of deep lamentation. It is only in the intermediate parts that we meet with exe-

* See Munstereus, in Pole's Synopsis.

cration, and in those parts we are to understand the language first of Shimei, reviling and cursing David, from the beginning of verse 6th to the end of verse 15th—then of David declaring his assurance, from verse 15th to the end of verse 19th, that the curses he had detailed would recoil on their wicked author. Upon the 20th verse, which, by the consent of Dr. Sykes as well as Mr. Peters, must be ascribed to David, as speaking of himself, there will be no difficulty, if we adopt one or other of the interpretations proposed by Dr. Kennicott. David, says he, after reciting the imprecations of his enemies, adds (not immediately, I must remark, but at some distance), "Though they curse, yet bless thou." Perhaps it may be still objected, that David seems to make these curses his own by saying, in verse 19th, "Let it thus happen from the Lord unto mine enemies." But as there is no word here expressive of a wish in Hebrew, perhaps the words should be rendered—"This is the behaviour of mine adversaries with respect to (or with) Jehovah." The compound particle *mat* is rendered, "on the behalf of," in Exod. xxvii. 21; but if it be thought preferable to render the words, "This is the behaviour of mine adversaries (or of those who accuse me) before Jehovah;" *mat* is rendered ἐνώπιον in Lev. xxiv. 8.* Whether we do or do not follow Kennicott in substituting, "behaviour of mine adversaries before (or with respect to) Jehovah," for "the reward of mine adversaries from Jehovah," it becomes us well to recollect, that in the Ethiopic Version, the Arabic,

* P. 582 of Kennicott's Dissertations, vol. ii.

the Septuagint, the version of Munster, the version of Montanus, and the translation of Ainsworth, we have the word "opus," and that by no rule of interpretation can "opus" be understood "pro mercede operis," though some critics have contended for this opinion.* Well, then, David in the five verses which we are now considering, does not express a desire, but strongly conceives and strongly paints a future event—he does not pray directly or indirectly that God would inflict a curse upon his accuser, but he supposes, that under the just administration of God's providence, a curse would fall upon him. This temperate, and in a man so cruelly treated, not unreasonable language, is in perfect harmony with the sober, humble, and pious expressions which succeed. It is indeed quite inconceivable that from the violent and inhuman imprecations, which occur in the earlier parts of the Psalm, David should instantly make a transition to the plaintive strains, which now follow to the end of the Psalm:—"This will be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord; but do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake, because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me (v. 21): for I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me (v. 22): I am gone like the shadow, when it declineth; I am tossed up and down as the locust (v. 23): My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness (v.

* There are quoted for it Leviticus, xix. v. 13. Job, vii. v. 2. Isaiah, xlix. v. 44. Ezekiel, xxix. v. 20. See Pole, who mentions four critics that adopt it.

24): I become also a reproach unto them; when they looked upon me, they shaked their heads (v. 25): Help me, O Lord my God; O save me according to thy mercy (v. 26): That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, Lord, hast done it (v. 27): Let them curse, but bless thou; when they arrive let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice (v. 28): Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame; and let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle (v. 29): I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude (v. 30): For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor to save him from those that condemn his soul (v. 31)." I should have done injustice to the merit of David by mutilating the conclusion of the Psalm, when I wished you to contrast the phraseology of it with the parts, which come before it, and which I have assigned to Shimei. He who thus reasons, thus feels, and thus supplicates—he who states the accusations of his enemy without retorting them—he whose mind is bent far more closely upon his own sufferings than upon their crimes—he who entreats God to deal with him according to his mercy, and hopes that, although his enemies should curse, yet God would bless—he who declares that while those enemies are clothed with shame (and it is shame, you observe, not *perdition*, which he describes as their doom,) the servant of the Lord should rejoice—he that expresses his intention of giving great thanks unto that Lord, who would stand at the right hand of the poor, and save him from them

that condemn his soul—such a man, speaking in such a spirit of resignation and gratitude to the God of all mercies, never could, at so short a distance of time, have called down the vengeance of God upon his adversaries in such a long, and a loud, and a fierce strain of imprecation.

It remains for me to make some useful remarks upon the influence, which the real conduct of David ought to have upon your faith, your dispositions, and your actions.

We cannot always know the events, to which particular passages in the sacred, as well as profane writers of antiquity allude, and therefore to a modern reader they sometimes lose part of their force, and part of their perspicuity; but it well becomes us to take care, how with our imperfect knowledge of events, customs, words, and combinations of words, we raise any rash charges against the fidelity or accuracy of sacred historians, or indulge ourselves in dark and slanderous reproaches against those persons, who are represented to us, as occasionally acting with the peculiar approbation, or speaking under the supernatural guidance, of Almighty God. Doubtless even among men, whose general conduct was praiseworthy, we find in sacred writ, weak, and even criminal actions recorded of them, but recorded you will observe in such a manner, as to guard every attentive and serious reader from mistake, and to leave him free from all doubts upon that which he is to avoid, and that which he is to imitate. In the history of David's behaviour towards Uriah, the complicated guilt of adultery and

murder is described in very strong terms, and a most useful warning is given us against the commission of those crimes. Fortunately upon the present subject we may appeal to the testimony of a writer not very remarkable for his lenity in combating popular opinions, nor for his candour in describing the actions, which sacred or profane history has regarded of persons eminently distinguished by their intellectual or moral excellencies. "The amour," says Mr. Bayle, "of David with the wife of Uriah, and the orders he gave to destroy her husband, are two most enormous crimes; but he was so grieved for them, and expiated them by so admirable a repentance, that this is not the passage in his life wherein he contributes the least to the instruction and edification of the faithful. We therein learn the frailty of the saints, and it is a precept of vigilance. We therein learn in what manner we ought to lament our sins, and it is an excellent model." *

In order to rescue your minds from every wrong conception, and every uneasy feeling upon the character of David, I have not only endeavoured to rescue him from the blame to which the imprecations contained in the 109th Psalm as erroneously understood, would expose him; but I have vindicated another part of his conduct, which has often been censured with the utmost severity by the enemies of revelation. If the view I then took of David's character be right, most unjustly have the dying in-

* See Bayle.

structions of David to Solomon been likened to the atrocities of Nero, who privately commanded his subjects to be murdered, from gloomy suspicion or fell revenge. But very justly may his clemency to Shimei be compared with the generosity of Alexander in pardoning Lyncestes, a conspirator with Pausanias, against the life of his father Philip, when in a spirit of unfeigned remorse and zealous loyalty he came the first of the Macedonians to do homage to the young monarch on his accession to the throne. *

Doubtless then, if we reflect upon the innocence of David as to the charge of having cursed his adversary upon the conduct of Shimei, who had insulted David, and upon the penitence of David, as well as his guilt towards Uriah, we may without any imputation of unbecoming partiality turn for a moment our attention from his faults to his sufferings.†

---

* See Quintus Curtius, l. 7. c. i.

† I have largely unfolded that principle in the human heart, which teaches us to look with uncommon pity and uncommon respect upon the misfortunes of kings; and surely, if instead of acting as an instrument of providence for extraordinary purposes, David had reigned over a people, whose manners and religion were different from those of the Jews, his criminal behaviour towards Uriah, united with the indignities and wrongs which he received from Absalom, would have given him a character peculiarly fit for dramatic representation, according to the well known and well founded principle laid down by Aristotle. "The change," says he, "from prosperity to adversity should not be represented as happening to an eminently virtuous character, for this raises disgust rather than terror or com-

In the case of Uriah his guilt is indisputable; but let us recollect that he acknowledged that guilt, that he deplored it, and gave the surest indications of that μετάνοια or virtuous change in the heart, which in the English language is obscurely and imperfectly expressed by the word repentance. Can you then be so blind or so profligate, as to suppose that the crime of David will furnish any justification to yourselves in similar circumstances? Will you vindicate that which the offender himself condemned? Will you be careless or obdurate under the consciousness of actions, the remembrance of which bowed down the soul of David, and pierced him with the keenest anguish? Can you look forward with impunity to yourselves, when the same Scriptures, which inform you of David's aggravated misconduct, have preserved for your instruction the

---

passion: nor, again, should the fall of a very bad man from prosperous to adverse fortune be represented, because though such a subject may be pleasing from its moral tendency, it will produce neither pity nor terror, for our pity is excited by misfortunes undeservedly suffered, and our terror by some resemblance between the sufferer and ourselves. Neither of these effects will, therefore, be produced by such an event. There remains, then, for our choice, the character between these extremes, that of a person neither eminently virtuous or just, nor yet involved in misfortune by deliberate vice or villainy, but by some error of human frailty, and this person should also be some one of high fame and flourishing prosperity." (See Twining's Translation, p. 87.) But passing from a question of taste to weightier considerations of morality, I contend that neither David's real guilt in his behaviour towards Uriah, nor his supposed guilt in cursing enemies, affords the slightest degree of excuse to profaneness or libertinism.

quickness and the severity of the punishment which overtook him, and the sincerity of that contrition and that amendment, which restored him to the favour of the Deity?

Again, of the charge brought against David for uttering the malicious and tremendous imprecations contained in the 109th Psalm, I have endeavoured to convince you that he was altogether guiltless. Yet upon the supposition that those imprecations did really fall from his lips, do you think that the authority of such a pattern will protect you at the tribunal of God, that it will even extenuate your guilt in yielding yourselves up to the most odious passions of the soul, in extinguishing the best feelings of humanity, in violating every plain and established and salutary rule of decorum, in calling even upon your Maker and your Judge to be the instrument of your own headstrong and unbridled rage? No, my brethren, though David be described to you as "a man after God's own heart," his example will be of no avail to you, when you wilfully transgress the clear and hallowed laws of that God. But the explanation which you have this day heard will, I trust, preserve you from such fatal delusion. You will now find, that in cursing your enemies you are imitating not David, but Shimei—not a monarch raised up to his throne, by the supernatural favour of heaven—not a prophet writing under the immediate inspiration of heaven, but a malicious accuser, a profane swearer, an unprincipled ingrate, a perfidious, audacious, and sanguinary rebel. His example ought to be holden up to your detestation. It

is recorded for your admonition; and, if the remembrance of it fail to deter you from rushing into the same crime, it will unquestionably increase your condemnation in the day of judgment.

Faultless David certainly was not, even in his own view of his own actions. It was by no means the intention of the sacred historian to represent him as a man perfectly blameless; but where is the justice or where the decorum of pointing our censure against his faults without any reserve of praise for his virtues, or compassion for his misfortunes? Hitherto I have sustained the part of an advocate for this monarch in two cases, where his conduct has been unfairly blamed; and in a third where he deserves commendation as well as blame. But his reputation for benevolence is chiefly interested in the topics upon which this discourse is employed; and as I wish the brighter parts of his character to have the proper and complete force of example upon your own minds, I will now set before you three remarkable instances in which he is entitled to unqualified commendation, and from which you will perceive that he was distinguished by qualities the very reverse of those, which your misconception of the curses you read in the 109th Psalm would induce you to impute to him.

When the rebellion stirred up by Absalom was fresh—when the invectives and execrations of Shimei were yet sounding in David's ears—when Abishai had asked leave to go over and take off his head—the king, conscious of his own wickedness towards Uriah, patiently submits to every insult and

every injury as being due to himself from the justice of God—he pathetically suggests a kind of extenuation for the comparative guilt of Shimei, and humbly indulges the hope, that upon repentance he should himself finally be pardoned. "Behold my son," says he, "which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life! how much more may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look upon mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." Take notice that, in an hour of recent and most unprovoked wrong, he asks a blessing for himself, but utters no curse against Shimei. The event, too, you will remember, corresponds with David's expectation. Absalom perished—Shimei was vanquished—David continued to reign. Shall I be told, then, that David's extreme rage against Absalom blunted his sense of the wrong done unto him by Shimei, and that he almost implacably hated a son, while he was disposed almost to forgive a subject? To such an objection Sacred History will supply me with a direct and plenary confutation. After the battle had ceased, the first anxious inquiry of David was, "Is the young man Absalom saved?" And when Cushi answered, "The enemies of my lord the king be as that young man is, the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would to God I had died for thee; O Absalom, my son, my son!" He even continued thus to mourn for Absalom

amidst the murmurs of his dutiful subjects, "who gat them by stealth that day into the city as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle." He continued to mourn amidst the reproaches of the valiant, and hitherto faithful Joab, who accused his master of loving his enemy, of hating his friends, of declaring that he "regarded neither princes nor sovereigns," and who openly avowed his own opinion, that "if Absalom had lived, and all they had died, then it had pleased David well." Seldom, I think, do we see even parental affection carried to such an amiable extent under such trying circumstances.

But further. When Shimei made his submission, the sincerity of which must have been doubtful—when Abishai exclaimed, "Shall not Shimei be put to death, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?"—when the guilt of Shimei was thus brought home to the memory and the feelings of the king, he spared the offender, and gave an oath that he should not die—spared him in opposition to the entreaties of a zealous and loyal servant—spared him at a time when other injured parents would have been struck with horror at the remembrance of ingratitude in that son, whose cause had been espoused by the offender—spared him, when other triumphant generals would have been listening to the shouts of victory—spared him, when other offended monarchs would have uplifted the sword of justice against an insolent, and treacherous, and murderous champion of rebellion.

If you reflect upon the conduct of David in the three cases just now offered to your consideration,

you will find that humility, not pride—that tenderness, not obduracy—that mercy, not revenge, were the characteristic properties of David's mind. You will perceive that, in the case of Shimei, his sovereign rising far above the common infirmities of nature, and anticipating, as it were, the sublime and holy spirit of Christianity itself, presents to you a most striking pattern for the exercise of forgiveness. You will acknowledge, too, that he who thus wept for an ungrateful son, and thus pardoned a captive traitor, must have been incapable of addressing to his Maker the numerous and odious imprecations, which I have this day assigned to another person, whose general malignity of disposition, and whose marked animosity against David are perfectly reconcileable to so much bitterness combined with so much impiety.

To conclude. In your progress through life it may be your lot to meet with many a venomous slanderer—many an ungenerous rival—many a perfidious friend—many a rancorous foe—many a callous ingrate, and many a furious oppressor. By dark intrigue or daring outrage you may be endangered in your well-earned fortunes, your well founded claims, and even your personal safety. Be it so. But have you not been taught, that it is the indispensable duty of a Christian to forgive his enemies? In this very sanctuary have you not again and again implored, upon your bended knees, the pardon of heaven for your own trespasses, on the condition of pardoning those who trespass against yourselves? Have you not read that your Redeemer, when reviled, did

not revile again, and that, in the last moments of an agonizing and ignominious death, he uttered at once a supplication, and an apology for his destroyers—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus are the precepts of our religion, and the practice of its blessed Author in perfect unison with the most amiable feelings of our heart, and with all the affectionate sympathies of the wise and good. We are instructed indeed to disapprove and to discourage evil actions; but we are not permitted to speak with undistinguishing disapprobation, or to think with unrelenting severity, or to behave with an unrestrained hostility towards evil agents. On the contrary, we are positively forbidden to call down the fire of heaven upon any offender, because he is our fellow-creature, and, it may be, our fellow Christian, and because we are ourselves fellow-sinners. We are expressly directed to love those who hate us, and to bless those who curse us—and is it possible that love and hatred can dwell in our own bosoms, or that blessing and cursing can issue from our mouths, directed at the same moment against the same objects? If then, in opposition to commands so plain and just, so peremptory and solemn, you imitate the example of Shimei rather than that of Christ, heinous must be your guilt, and heavy must be your punishment. Mark well, too, that the infliction of this punishment does not depend upon the secret wishes, or the wrathful words, or the insidious contrivance, or the vindictive efforts of man, but is fixed irrevocably by the righteous and awful councils of God himself.

If a man delights in cursing, sooner or later it shall happen unto him; but if he loveth blessing, it shall not be far from him.*

---

* Having spoken of the change of number in the Psalm, I state from the Polyglott the following particulars. In the Hebrew the singular begins at the 6th verse, continues to the 19th, and all the plurals which intervene relate not to the adversary, but to his parents and children. In the 20th verse we have the plural belonging to the word adversaries.

In the Chaldee paraphrase the singular begins at verse 6th, goes on to the end of the 19th, and then comes the plural.

In the Latin Vulgate the singular begins at the 6th verse, continues to the end of the 19th, and the 20th verse begins—"Hoc opus eorum."

In the Septuagint the singular begins in verse 6th, *κατάστησον ἐπ' αὐτὸν*, continues to the 19th, and in the 20th we have the plural *τοῦτο τὸ ἐργὸν τῶν ἐνδιαβάλλοντων με*.

In the Ethiopic version the singular begins at verse 6th. The order of verses is somewhat different, and the 19th verse, which corresponds to the 20th in the other versions, begins—"Hoc opus eorum."

In the Syriac version the plural is continued from the beginning of the Psalm to the 19th verse, and so on.

In the Arabic version the singular begins at verse 6th, the plural at verse 20th, and there the translation is not "Hoc opus est eorum," but "hoc fiet eis."

In the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, and the Ethiopic, the 109th Psalm is called the 108th. I shall explain this variation in the words of Calmet:—"The Jews make two of the 9th, and begin their 10th at these words of Psalm ix. v. 22. 'Why standeth thou afar off, O Lord?' so that from this place to Psalm cxiii. their citations and numbers are different from the Latin and Greek. The Protestant Churches and the English version, following this division of the Hebrews, quote the Psalms in like manner."

CHRONOLOGICAL ERROR NOTICED.

It may be of importance to notice a chronological mistake in our translation, when we read in 2 Sam. c. xv. v. 7. "And it came to pass that after forty years Absalom said unto the king." David, you will observe, reigned only forty years, seven in Chebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem, and what passed between him and Absalom was long before the end of his reign. Absalom himself is described as a beautiful youth with flowing hair, and never reached his fortieth year. Now by some means or other a numeral *jod* seems to have crept into the Hebrew text, which being added to the digit, or *daleth*, the numerical 4, converted the number into tens. But, if we take away the jod, or tittle, all will be clear, and the four years must be calculated from Absalom's flight to Geshur. Here he continued nearly three years. During the third year he was recalled to his father's house, and he requited this mercy by estranging the hearts of his father's subjects from their sovereign to himself. When he had been in Jerusalem about two years, and the suspicions of his father were so allayed, that Absalom was admitted into the royal presence at that time, which was quite four years after his retreat to Geshur, he disguised his treasonable purposes by entreating his father to let him go down and pay his vow in Hebron.*

* See Note to Baron Holberg's History, p. 13.

* Note to page 531, concerning *ἀπήγξατο*.

ὥστε μ' ἀπάγχεσθαι.

Aristophanis Nubes, v. 984.

Bergler's note is this:—"Pro cruciari in Vespis, v. 693. *ὅ μάλιστα μ' ἀπάγχει*, in Acharn. v. 125. *ταῦτα δῆτ' οὐκ ἀγχόνη*: sic et *πνίγεσθαι* hic in Nub. v. 1035." The passage in the Nubes is as follows:

Καὶ μὴν πάλ' ἔγωγ' ἐπνιγόμην τὰ σπλάχνα.

We have in Herodotus, lib. II. c. 139. p. 166. ed. Wesseling, *ἡ παῖς ἀπήγξατο ὑπὸ ἄχεος*. This is a disputed passage, and Wesseling's note runs thus:—"Obtinuerunt hæc locum in famosa nostræ ætatis lite, *περὶ τοῦ ἀπάγχεσθαι*. Jac. Gronovius illis aciem instruxit in Defensione Exercitat. de Pernicie Judæ, p. 62., contra acriter venit Jac. Perizonius Diss. de Morte Judæ, c. 9. p. 74. Amavi utrumque v. cl. ob. eximias ingenii et eruditionis dotes, rixa ipsa, etiamnum juveni, visa fuit modum excessisse. Gronovium laudo, ejus hic (i. e. in his Notes on Herodotus) iteratione abstinentem." From the praise bestowed on Gronovius for not resuming the subject, it should seem that Wesseling rather inclined to the opinion of Perizonius. "'Αγχόμενος idem quod *πνιγόμενος* apud Hippocratem, i. e. qui suffocatur;" so says Gorræus in his Lexicon, where *ἀγχίνη* is suffocation generally; but in the passage quoted from Dioscorides, the halter as the cause of suffocation is specifically mentioned, *μύκητες ἐπιφέρουσι πνιγμοὺς ἐοικότας ἀγχόναις*, i. e. "fungi suffocationem inferunt similem laqueo interclusis faucibus:" "*πνιξ* et *πνιγμὸς* est suffocatio, sive subitus interitus ob respirationis defectum." Gorræus mentions three causes from Galen, an external cause, as a halter or hand; an internal cause, as repletion, &c. Afterwards there is mention of suffocation from various herbs.

SERMON XXII A.*

ON CHRIST'S GOING UP TO JERUSALEM WITH HIS PARENTS.

LUKE ii. 49.

Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business.

THERE is interwoven into the very frame of our souls, a curiosity to know the most trivial actions of illustrious men, and to pry into all the minute parts of such characters, as are lifted up to admiration, for extent of knowledge, brightness of genius, or eminence of virtue. On these occasions we mechanically, as it were, affix the idea of general excellence to particular circumstances in which that excellence can hardly prevail; and with the utmost eagerness inquire into those petty incidents, that in persons less respectable we should pass over with all the coolness of indifference. Thus, viewed through the medium of an honest prejudice, each object swells into importance, and we take a sort of interest in every event that brings back to our memory the goodness we love, and the greatness we revere. A little reflection on the workings of our own minds will account for this propensity to

* 1772.

join things, between which a real and external analogy seldom subsists. I say seldom, because in some rare cases the predominant faculty of the understanding, and the ruling passions of the heart communicate their influence even to the most inconsiderable parts of human agency. In every great object, our attention is first seized by some leading, essential quality, and for a time absorbed in the contemplation of it. When we descend to a more particular examination, inferior beauties strike upon our view, and stir up emotions of a feebler kind than those, we before experienced. By these means our moral as well as intellectual taste is gratified; and when this is the case, our ideas insensibly blend the most disproportionate dissimilar qualities into one assemblage, and then act back on each other, by a procedure not less wonderful than that, by which they were primarily brought together. This principle of associating and confounding images originally unconnected enables us to acquire a surpassing intenseness in our perceptions, and bestows too additional value on the things perceived. Hence the principal qualities borrow grace from such as are subordinate, and the subordinate derive dignity from the principal. Hence all the respective parts of a finished character, receive and communicate a lustre distinct from their own. They suggest a succession of ideal relations. They produce their full effect upon the beholder, by making up one perfect consistent whole, which at once transports us with amazement, warms us with affection, and awes us unto respect. Would we, how-

ever, trace out all the causes of the curiosity just now mentioned, we must look beyond the impression that an object makes upon us by an artificial conjunction and modification of its beauties—we must as well attend to the various species and degrees of entertainment those beauties excite when stript of all foreign ornament, and analysed in that state of separation and mutual independence, in which they actually exist.

When any uncommon degree of intellectual and moral excellence attracts our notice, all the energies of our fancy are suddenly set in action, all our faculties expand themselves to the utmost dimensions of their object, and by taking in one great sentiment of sublimity, we feel not only our curiosity gratified, but our most enlarged capacity of comprehending filled up. Yet the stretch of understanding necessary to make us capable of this pleasure, in some measure diminishes it; nay, the pleasure itself soon becomes painful to us, through the violence of the emotions by which it is produced. Dazzled, therefore, by the glare of the more elevated and more conspicuous qualities, we gladly let down our attention to such as have less solidity to exercise the judgment, and less splendour to amaze the imagination—such as employ the mind without fatiguing, and gratify without cloying it. 'Tis true, in looking up to merit far above our attainment, we are conscious of some dignity from the bare approbation of what is noble; but the satisfaction we receive is more soothing, and more durable, when the agent is thrown in a nearer attitude—when we

see those, whom every eye beholds with wonder, every tongue mentions with applause, descend to the common business of the world, placed in situations ourselves have experienced, and actuated by motives ourselves have felt. Hence then we see the reason of that impatience, we all acknowledge, after the most trivial concerns of those we admire. In the first place, the nobler accomplishments seem to stamp a value on those, to which they bear no relation. In the second, exclusively of the pleasure the mind derives from its own efforts, in combining the greater objects with the less, the latter are by their own specific nature more agreeable to us than the former. Admiration is soon exhausted, and succeeded by lassitude; but delight from each new gratification, secretly extracts a power of being further gratified, and propagating itself in long succession, without the languor of satiety, and without the turbulence of excessive enjoyment. This inquisitiveness after trifles, however the affectation of a philosophic spirit may lead us to ridicule it, the most strenuous repeated struggles are insufficient to subdue; and therefore if its universality and its force may be allowed as any proof of its use, we may conclude it implanted in us for nobler purposes than its own immediate gratification.

The most uninteresting scenes indeed of a life distinguished for superior desert may convey some information to a serious observer; for the progress of our thoughts in uniting extraordinary excellencies with ordinary, is not more rapid than in the transition they make from others to ourselves, when

that union has once taken place. While we survey the virtues of respectable men brought down in a manner to a level with us, the mind imperceptibly steals back to our own conduct—we are charmed with every appearance of resemblance between ourselves, and those we reverence—and we feel a pride in doing, what wiser and better men have done, not from any consciousness of intrinsic worth in the action, but from a sense of imitation. The final influence, however, of this sense, is by no means confined to such parts of our behaviour, as are exempted from blame, or entitled to a petty share of praise. On the contrary, it animates us with new ardour in the exertion of our own powers, and flatters us with the expectation of rivalling our superiors in many instances, though we are totally destitute of those extraordinary endowments, by which they stand distinguished from the bulk of mankind. Hence the example of persons who at once excite our love, and command our veneration, instructs without reproaching us. Instead of repining at our infirmity, which never becomes ridiculous, but by our own injudicious endeavours to dissemble it, we call up to our thoughts every motive that can animate emulation—we resolutely pursue the excellence that is placed within our reach—and aspire, perhaps, to those more noble degrees of eminence, which it is no mean honour to approach.

There are few readers but have felt that mixture of pleasure and amazement, which the different situations of any illustrious person excite, when they have read the history of our Saviour; and well

they might feel it, since he is the only person in whom every amiable, every venerable quality has concentered in its full perfection. In examining fictitious or real character, we are agreeably lieved by the familiar and striking; but in the former case, the less we believe, the less we are interested, and in the latter, we must be sometimes disgusted with the common infirmities of human nature—with the errors of the wisest man—and the faults of the best. On the other hand, we are convinced that Christ's virtues really existed as they are described to us—that they were perfect in their several kinds, and shaded by no attendant blemishes or imperfections. On this account, we receive a degree both of complacency and astonishment from the survey of his conduct, which no other representation can give. Great without ostentation, he awes—familiar without meanness, he charms us; and by a happy temperature of ease and dignity on every occasion, he indirectly awakens the more delicate feelings, while those of the more powerful kind are more immediately excited. Hence in the important transactions of his life, he at once astonishes and pleases us; in the more ordinary he never wins our affection without drawing after it our respect. So various indeed are the situations in which he is represented to us—such the uniformity of his behaviour in all of them, that every part of our Lord's character challenges our regard, and will doubtless furnish to every attentive mind the most rational and exquisite, as well as the most solid improvement.

St. Luke, who composed his Gospel with the

assistance of St. Paul, has been remarkably particular in relating the less momentous circumstances of our Saviour's life; and we are indebted to him for the knowledge of many incidents, which the other Evangelists have omitted—such especially as the meanness of our Saviour's birth—the evidence of the shepherds—the presentation of Christ in the temple—the congratulation of Simeon and Anna—and the early display of our Lord's knowledge and piety in the controversy he supported against the Jewish doctors.

The scene in which the holy child is here represented, has always seemed to me likely to impress you with the most exalted ideas of your great Redeemer, and to mark in a very forcible manner, that high favour in which he stood with God. For this reason, I shall explain to you more at large, on what occasion our Lord then appeared in Jerusalem; I shall enumerate the more material occurrences that happened during his continuance there; and to relieve you from the languor that the sameness of continued narrative is apt to produce, I shall drop a few historical and moral circumstances of this curious and instructive little story as they rise before us.

When Jehovah had given that signal instance of his favour to the Jews, and of his displeasure against the Egyptians, by destroying the first born of Pharaoh and his subjects, he instituted a standing memorial of the event in the feast of the Passover This feast was ordered to be kept in the month Nisam from *nus*, *fugere*, denoting the event, or

rather Abib, an ear of corn, denoting the season—corresponding to our April. It began on the fourteenth day, and continued for seven days, in allusion to which custom St. Luke says, "when the days were accomplished."

I am far from recommending to you the visionary relations between numbers which vulgar superstition and philosophical mysticism have multiplied with a most ridiculous extravagance; yet the principle to which such wild associations appeal, and to the perversion of which they owe their success, is deeply rooted in the human mind. Where the understanding has not been invigorated and enlarged by frequent exercise—where it has been employed rather upon familiar and exterior objects, than upon topics which require the most profound, subtile abstractions, it is neither uncommon, nor unbecoming the wisest men to avail themselves of those arbitrary and artificial associations, to which there are such strong propensities in the nature of men. To those propensities Moses, whose laws were addressed to a people very imperfectly civilized, and whose sagacity, independently of all preternatural assistance, would have done honour to the most enlightened legislator, has occasionally accommodated himself with great dexterity. As the history he delivered to the Jews, describes the creation occupied through seven days, many of his ceremonial institutions have a reference to that number. The seventh day was kept holy. Many of the solemn feasts lasted seven days. There was an interval of seven weeks between the passover

and the pentecost. The month, in which the deliverance our Lord commemorated took place, is emphatically called the *first* month; before that event, the Hebrew year, like the Syriac commenced in October, and it is to be observed, that Moses, when he speaks of the deluge, adapts his terms to that mode of calculation. But on the auspicious departure of the Jews from Egypt, the year began by the express appointment of Moses, at the time when they were delivered; and though writers seem to contend for a distinction between the ecclesiastical commencing in the spring, and the civil commencing in the autumn, there is no clear external proof, beyond the assertions of the later Jews to support this position; and from the nature of the Jewish Theocracy, where the religious and political were intimately blended, we have no reason to explain away the simple and consistent language of scripture, where April is called the first, and October the seventh month. This observation I would remark by and bye, subverts the hypothesis of those, who suppose from the Hebrew calculation, that the world was created in the autumn; and by showing at least with some appearance of probability that Moses connected in his new institution, the creation of the world with the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. It countenances that tradition, which is supported by physical appearances, and very ancient tradition, concerning the original foundation of this system in the spring.

I proceed to illustrate by further instances the high importance of the religious rite, at which our Lord attended.

To impress a more lasting sense of their deliverance on this stubborn capricious people, it was called the first month. All male persons were obliged to attend on the ceremony, who were not disqualified by some impurity, or prevented by a long journey that rendered it almost impracticable. We find Mary going up with her husband to Jerusalem, though the observance of this feast seems to have been remitted to women, from a judicious and delicate regard to their infirmities, their chastity, and their domestic employments. The Rabbins indeed tell us, that women were bound to keep the first passover, and that the second, because of later institution, and of inferior solemnity, was neglected, or observed according to choice. This opinion, however, seems to be built on no respectable authority, or even probable conjecture; and therefore we may be assured, that those who were neither strictly enjoined, nor expressly forbidden to come, were left to the discretion of their own judgment. But that women were not absolutely excluded, is evident from the terms in which the solemnization was appointed; and we have the venerable examples of Hannah and Peninnah, the wives of Elkanah, to justify the conduct of Mary in the case before us.

As no positive command was laid on these persons, we must attribute their behaviour, not to a spirit of idle curiosity—not to an ostentatious display of piety, but to that pure—that vital—that only efficacious sense of religion, which influences us in all parts of our duty, and embraces every oppor-

tunity of serving God. Jesus it seems went up with them. There was a peculiar propriety in his going up to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover, as the positive order of God enjoined the presentation of every male child, and as the wonderful event then to be commemorated was likely to impress a young mind with the strongest conviction of the divine providence, love for the divine goodness, and reverence for the divine power. "Three times a year, says God, shall thy males appear before the Lord in the place which he shall choose, in the feast of unleavened bread, in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles." The particular reason of this custom is thus mentioned in Exodus xiii. 14—"and it shall come to pass when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, what meaneth this, that thou shalt say, by a strong hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, and from the house of bondage."

The law of Moses, as it relates to the presentation at the passover, was obligatory only on males; and by that analogy which prevails in every moral action, did not extend to those who were incapable by their age of distinguishing between right and wrong, of knowing the cause, or performing the rites of this feast. No precise time was indeed fixed for this presentation. It consequently was settled by men of learning and piety, who generally appointed the twelfth year. There are many collateral proofs to support this assertion, partly derived from the practice of other nations, and partly of the Jews themselves. At twelve years, virgins were capable of marriage

among the Romans. At twelve years, Solomon, says a venerable father of the Church (Ignatius), decided between the two women, who appealed to him. After the entrance into the thirteenth year, every person among the Jews was called a son of the precept, because subject to the law, and was exposed to punishment for the violation of it.

The presentation of Christ in the Temple did not supersede the necessity of his appearance at this feast. These presentations were indeed appointed for different reasons, and included different persons. The one was confined to the first child, the other extended to all males. The one answered the purpose of purification to the mother, and kept the male infant for eight days from the touch of man, and for forty from public assemblies. The other was more especially confined to the child, and intended to initiate him in the duties of the law, and to acquaint him with one remarkable blessing, by which God claims his obedience.

If we consider the end of this presentation, the period assigned for it will appear in many accounts highly judicious. Our minds about this time receive good impressions easily and afterwards retain them long—our curiosity is attentive and vigorous—our faculties somewhat strengthened by education—our feelings powerfully excited by each object that occurs—and our reason pleased with every opportunity of exerting itself, and capable at least of some distinction between good and evil.

In regard to our Saviour, he, in what is usually called his human nature, was distinguished by an

extraordinary quickness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, and extent of knowledge. He increased in wisdom with a rapidity that amazed his acquaintance, and confirmed all the expectation they had secretly formed of his future excellence. After the conclusion of the religious rites, his parents were on their return, and supposing him lost in the multitude that came to Jerusalem for the same purpose as themselves, they for a day suppressed their fears. Led back by their anxiety, they search for him in every place—they inquire after him of every relation — they at last find him disputing amongst the doctors. The Rabbi here mentioned were men, whose employment was to vindicate and explain the Mosaical economy — to answer all inquiries that were made into the propriety of its ceremonies, and the force of its precepts—and to refute every objection that might be urged against the validity of the law, or the authority of its author. The place, where they gave their instructions was an outer court adjoining to the temple. Here the most eminent instructors were raised on seats above their audience ; the inferior were indulged with the privilege of sitting on mats spread over the floor, and their disciples were placed standing at the feet of their instructors. The doctors, charmed at the propriety of our Saviour's questions, and the readiness of his remarks, admitted him to a more honourable situation. He was found, says the Evangelist, sitting among the doctors—a favour he most amply deserved, and they were ready enough to confer, whilst his doctrines did not interfere with their am-

bitious and worldly views, their attachment to idle traditions, and their fondness for trifling forms. This is the first instance in which our heavenly Master gave proof of his supernatural powers; and it is surely accompanied by circumstances, that most strikingly point out the strength of his judgment, the weight of his reasonings, and the dignity of his character. He was engaged in debate with men versed in all the arts of controversy—admired by people for the warmth of their zeal, and the depth of their learning, and the sanctity of their profession—with men who were strenuously attached to the cause they had undertaken to defend, and who were obstinately determined to support their own particular interpretations of the law in their full extent.

The place our Lord chose for the display of his abilities, was peculiarly proper. Hither resorted the curious and the pious — all whom the love of truth led to search for knowledge, where it was most likely to be obtained, or a sense of duty prompted to inquire into the grounds of that religion they so highly valued, and so firmly maintained. The time too was very advantageous. So rigourous were the injunctions of the law in respect to the passover — such the scrupulous exactness of the Jews in their observance of this and indeed every other rite that soothed their superstition, and flattered their vanity, that great numbers we may be assured were present at this most solemn commemoration of a most wonderful deliverance. In an assembly thus numerous and thus disposed, Christ's opinions bid fair to be

more accurately examined and more widely spread. What in fact was the force of his arguments we may learn not only from the unusual respect they procured from the doctors, but the general effect they produced on the people —"and all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." The original word ἐξίσταντο implies all that irresistible conviction—that awe—that amazement, which seizes and overpowers us, when addressed by a person of eminently superior talents and dignity. It is applied moreover to the influence of our Saviour's precepts, when he was arrived at a more mature age, and taught in a more authoritative manner.

Jesus was discovered after the third day—a phrase very frequent among the scriptural writers, equivalent to the more common and perhaps more definite expression, upon the third day—implying the time at which any action is performed. His mother, in a spirit of eager but misplaced fondness, and in a tone of delicate, but undeserved rebuke, expostulates with him on his unexpected and distressing absence —"son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

Our Lord, though by no means insensible, doubtless, to the tender but misguided affection of his mother, yet preserves a manly consciousness of his own important office, and with a collected firmness — not an intemperate severity, replies —"how is it, that ye sought me? knew ye not, that I must be about my Father's business?" From the length and issue of the search, many commentators of reputation have affixed a different sense to the words of

my text—"knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" His parents concluded that he was returned after the accomplishments of the day, or at least supposed the temple to be the most improbable place for him to be found in. Jesus, therefore, reproves them for their ignorance of his great mission, and expresses a kind of surprise, that they should look for him in any other situation, than that which was most correspondent to it. As far as I can judge the original expression will unquestionably bear this sense; but is as properly and more frequently admits the other—ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πάτρος μοῦ δεῖ εἶναι με I have therefore adopted the meaning that is received in the common translation, and illustrated by the context. The answer, thus understood, shows, like the other interpretation, the importance of the task Christ was commissioned to execute, and carries with it additional force and spirit. It supposes the indispensible necessity of Christ's obedience to the commands of his heavenly Father; and it should have directed his earthly parents to yield all their own authority, and waive their interests, in consideration of the more sacred authority which Christ was bound to obey, and the more noble interests he was appointed to promote. The justness of the construction I have here put on the text, is yet further established by the subsequent remark of the Evangelist, that they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. How could they not understand what he meant by his Father's house, when they saw him there—or be at a loss, in this view, to conceive the propriety of his conversation

with the doctors, when the practice was so frequent among the Jews, and turned out so much to the credit of their son? What indeed was his Father's business, or what connection those debates had with it, they might easily not understand—they might easily be ignorant, while Christ was in this state of childhood, of the exalted office Christ was soon to sustain, the sublime truths he was to unfold, and the gracious ends he was to accomplish by the salvation of the world.

Should it be asked, how this could happen, the answer is obvious. Mary had been visited by an angel, who told her, that some illustrious person should be born of her womb. This declaration was afterwards confirmed by the many extraordinary circumstances that attended Christ's nativity, by the reports of the shepherds, and the pious exclamation of old Simeon. Yet all these events were insufficient to impress any rational conviction on a woman, whose very affection was likely to mislead her judgment—whose mind was possessed with general indistinct ideas of her son's excellence—or who referred the particulars of it to such opinions as the religious prejudices of her age had established, and the natural vanity, and perhaps weakness of her sex, might lead her to adopt. To us indeed, who are acted upon by the collective force of the evidence for Christianity, the words of the good old man are extremely intelligible. But on this occasion, as well as all others, where the dignity of their child was concerned, Mary and Joseph only marvelled. The truth is, they were not acquainted with

the proper character of the Messiah, and had preconceived, probably, the same hopes of a temporal deliverer, that their countrymen indulged, and their priests cherished. From this weakness the Apostles certainly were not exempt; they mistook the design of their master's coming, and waited with impatience for his demand of an earthly kingdom, after they had repeatedly heard his doctrines, after they had repeatedly seen his miracles, and had been reproved by him for the slowness of their hearts. For a time, then, both the parents and disciples of Christ laboured under the same ignorance, prepossessions and errors. They knew the favour in which he stood with God—they respected his wisdom—they loved his virtues — they had obscure notions of his dignity; but they were mistaken about the real end of his mission, and the most proper means for the attainment of that end.

In a future discourse, I shall probably set before you some practical instruction, which the story just explained to you suggests, for the regulation of your parental and your filial conduct. I shall conclude the present discourse with two plain inferences from what has been already offered to your consideration.

From the rebuke that Mary expressed to Jesus, who was engaged in his Father's business, of which she was utterly ignorant, we may learn to check all rash decisions on subjects to which we are not familiarised by long and impartial attention—to listen to the opinions of men who are more conversant in them than ourselves with respectful diffidence—

and to suppose that they may have wise and meritorious views in such actions as to superficial, incompetent, and prejudiced observers, appear improper.

From the example of Christ we find that religious employments should engage our first and largest share of application—that points of duty are not to be sacrificed to the prejudices even of the well-meaning—and that to abandon what we approve, in order to elude the scoffs, or propitiate the malice of the wicked, is to hazard our hopes of a better life for the sake of a precarious tranquillity in this, and to love the praise of fickle and short-sighted men, more than the approbation of an omniscient and most righteous God.

SERMON XXIII A.*

LUKE ii. 49.

Knew you not that I must be about my Father's business?

IN a former discourse on these words, I endeavonred to clear the text from the obscurity that hangs around its import, and to point out such references to ancient customs as might enable you to understand its full and real force. With this view, I explained to you the original design, and peculiar solemnity of the passover, for the celebration of which our Lord went up to Jerusalem. I opened to you the reasons for which Joseph and Mary disapproved of their Son's behaviour—reasons founded in timid ignorance and habitual mistakes; and I at the same time enforced the justification of our Lord by illustrating on the judicious reply, in which he rebuked, without insulting, their weakness, and confuted, without shocking, their prepossessions. In the present discourse, I shall consider the practical observations, suggested by the story of my text, for the regulation of your parental conduct.

In what manner the example of our Lord ought to influence young men is a subject, which from its extent and importance, must be reserved for some

* 1782.

future opportunity, and it may properly be reserved too; since, if parents could once be prevailed upon to pursue a right plan of education for their offspring, children might be more effectually persuaded to avail themselves of every advantageous opportunity for the attainment of religious knowledge and of virtuous manners. To control successfully the humours, and to form aright the judgments of the young, may be a difficult task; but it is far more difficult to conquer the unfeeling sluggishness, and extirpate the stubborn prejudices of the old; and yet, if the latter be not accomplished, the former will be attempted in vain. In the present discourse therefore, I shall consider the practical observations suggested by the story of my text, for the regulation of your parental conduct.

The early and zealous piety of our Lord inculcates one very interesting lesson, that religion ought to hold its rank among the first employments of our lives. Whatever be the proneness of men to evil, (not from any inherited or innate corruption, but from the proper and limited constitution of our nature—not from any judicial infliction, but from the wise appointment of Him who made us,) the effects of that proneness are easily counteracted by the moral sense and rational faculties with which we are endowed. The readiness of the human understanding, even in childhood, to separate right from wrong, when called forth, as our physical powers, whether of spiritual or corporeal agency must be, by external occasions—the tacit abhorrence it raises towards one, and the generous approbation it excites

of the other, all of us, I trust, have in some measure experienced. When the moral sense is strengthened by frequent use, the mind imperceptibly yields itself up to its directions, till single acts of virtue are confirmed into habits, and habits are regulated and perpetuated by principles.

Now to turn this capacity of young men for receiving improvement to the best advantage, and to encourage by exercise that preference which our unbiassed reason and our uncorrupted affections always give to what is good, should be our first and our greatest care. But the only method of giving permanence to any improvements which we may attempt, is to fix them on the surest basis — the sense of a supreme and moral governor, who has ordained all the laws, and directs all the events of the universe. The power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the deity—the punishments he has reserved for the wicked—and the rewards which he will bestow on the righteous, are topics, where the attention of young men may be soon captivated, and their curiosity made subservient to their duty. Is it not by occasional addresses to their hopes and their fears—by a judicious dispensation of praise and censure, that the first ideas of right, as the instrument of happiness, are introduced into the mind? And what is religious instruction, but the act of proposing new and greater objects to the same affections, and of quickening their efficacy by the same means?

When the advantages of intellectual superiority are holden up to us, we listen with eagerness to a

tale that flatters our vanity, and interests our passions—we forget every attendant difficulty of the task—and we anticipate in imagination the caresses of the great, and the commendations of the learned. The same admiration of moral excellence, and the same solicitude to obtain it might be excited in us, if its intrinsic beauty, its present dignity, and future recompense, were laid open to us. For, surely the respect of all good men, the approving sentence of our own hearts, and the bountiful favour of God, are motives almost irresistible to understandings, in appearance the meanest, and to feelings the dullest, if repeatedly and strongly urged. That they are employed, without effect, upon men more advanced in life, must be imputed to that rigidity, which our sensibilities contract, and that debility, into which our faculties silently decay, by long disuse; but were these truths impressed upon us before our thoughts are totally pre-occupied by different studies, and our opinions warped by vicious associations, the influence of them would be felt in the tenderness of children, in the vigour of youth, in the firmness of manhood, and the seriousness of age. Our Father's business would not only be our constant employment, but our supreme delight. By the contemplation of subjects, which grow more luminous, as they are oftener examined, the weakest of us might be enabled to render some account of the hope that is in him. He would perceive, in no contemptible degree, the evidences of the revelation, on which his best and dearest expectations are founded—the wonderful methods by which it was

established, and the glorious ends to which it is instrumental. He would be able from the inherent advantages of his cause, and the almost mechanical quickness of apprehension which habitual reflection always brings with it, to make a spirited and successful defence, when pressed by the scoffs of the libertine, and the cavils of the infidel.

Against these plain and momentous truths, there stands, I know, a host of objections, stated by men who would erect their own visionary systems on the ruins of Christianity, and adopted by those who eagerly press forward to catch the secondary and paltry reputation of admitting novelties, which themselves indeed have neither the ingenuity to invent nor the judgment to investigate. The folly and perverseness of all ages have procured for such romantic projects a reception far too easy; but the wide and rapid diffusion of the most pestilential publications in this age, has given a popularity to errors and a dignity to absurdites, which in times less depraved would have been hunted down by general contempt. Hence every opinion, which is connected with the authority of religion, or the prospects of futurity, has in these later times been stigmatized with the opprobrious name of prejudice.

But the arguments which prove that children ought not to be instructed early in such matters, can be supported only on the supposition that they ought not to be instructed at all. For if religion be an imposture, and futurity a dream, why should we harrass them with the rigours of the one or delude them with the expectation of the other? But

if the contrary be true, are not parents chargeable with inconsistence as well as cruelty, in admitting them to no share of attention?

When your children are intended for manual arts, or the more liberal professions, you acknowledge the necessity of being expeditious in beginning instruction, and you express solicitude to procure it from the best sources, within your reach. You do not leave, or at least you do not profess to leave, the event to blind accident. You do not repose your whole trust in the natural strength of your children's abilities, in the transient impulses of their inclinations, or in those precarious opportunities which are furnished by external events. You think it frenzy in others to be overruled in their purposes by the supine indifference or froward opposition of their offspring. You pronounce it wisdom in yourselves to proportion, as far as you can, the readiness, the constancy, and intenseness of their application to the immediate difficulty, and the final utility of its object.

However galling and irksome it may be to the views of young men, unenlightened by experience, and impatient of control—however abstruse be the speculations in any science, for which you intend them—and however laborious the process of any art, you do not make a willing sacrifice of your authority, or your judgment. If, then, you act with so much prudence, warranted by so much success in the affairs of this world, what, I beseech you, is there in the nature of the subjects themselves, or in the capacity of the understanding to manage

them, which shuts out religious truths from the benefit of a general rule, founded on general experience of its utility? Do you mean that they should continue to the close of life, in a train of conduct for which they are answerable to God, without any instruction concerning his will, or any solicitude for his favour? Then you act a flagitious, but not a contradictory part. Is it your intention to give religion, at some distant period, some scanty share of your regard, in the education of your children? Then by delaying it you defeat your own purposes; for what you hereafter offer to their consideration will be heard coldly, and may never be wrought up into the firmness and regularity of an opinion; or it must for ever remain prejudice, when the cares or the pleasures of the world are at hand to choke these reflections, which may call up reason to its support.

But in fact, these chimerical designs of parents are counteracted by the unalterable course of human affairs. We cannot be long engaged in lower stages, whether of speculative or of active life, but some notions of a primary creative cause, —of a superintending providence— of a moral governor, by whom good and evil are distinctly known, and will be adequately recompenced, will obtrude themselves on the mind. Upon evidence more or less pertinent, and with greater or less degree of correctness, opinions will be formed, let parents be ever so negligent from what quarters they proceed, or ever so anxious to prevent them from every quarter. And is it not then of the first moment, that they should be

formed rightly, when the effects of mistake must quickly be perceived in their desires, and their sentiments, and their actions? Here indeed I am bound to confess, that the gross and ridiculous abuses of religious education have chiefly given either spirit to the clamour, or plausibility to the reasonings, or currency to the tenets, of those, who would teach us to defer it till it is too late to undertake it with any probability of lasting success; while therefore I earnestly intreat you to employ your children, as Christ was employed, in the business of their heavenly Father, I, at the same time, most seriously exhort you to consider well in what that business really consists. The conceptions we form of a Deity unquestionably are, and unavoidedly must be, transferred to him from those which his works, and the relation in which we stand to them suggest to us; and on this, as well as every other topic, our personal observations, our natural dispositions, our trains of thinking, and our habits of acting, will have considerable influence. Thus the colour of our own minds will give a tinge to the character which we ascribe to our Maker—the gloomy will brood with sullen satisfaction over his terrors, and the cheerful expatiate with glowing exultation upon his mercies. But which, it will be asked, is likely to impress upon the mind of a child the firmest conviction, and to produce the most beneficial effects? I answer without hesitation, the mercies of the Lord.

If the Supreme Being be described as a governor too strong to be resisted, as a judge too rigourous to be satisfied, as an enemy (for the frantic lan-

guage of enthusiasm has sometimes reproached him with this hateful name) too fierce to be appeased, the mind will shrink with disgust and horror, from the contemplation of such a God; it will sink into abject despair, or from despair will seek a refuge in determined disbelief. But if you interest the better affections of a child while you are employing his better talents—if you silently make him feel his own strength in the gradual discovery of truth, and his own happiness in it when discovered—if you teach him to look up to his Maker in a spirit of confidence without presumptuous familiarity, and of reverence without slavish timidity—you have laid a broad and a solid foundation for all that is meritorious in faith, and all that is attainable in holiness. The religion of a child is not to be shut up within the narrow limits, by which parents often suffer their own to be circumscribed. You may teach him to repeat, I know not what unintelligible jargon—to put a high value on fantastic ceremonies—and to set up arrogant and almost exclusive pretensions to the regard of his Maker, from the sect or church in which he is accidentally brought up; but such opinions cherish a restless and despicable vanity, which is always liable to be mortified by opposite pretensions rested upon the opposite mistakes of others. They seldom reach the vital springs of action, or reach them only to oppress, and to enfeeble their tone. On the other hand, tell a child that not a blade shoots upon the earth, or a star spangles in the firmament, without the appointment of God—that the very food he eats, and the air he breathes, are the works of his hands—that not a

sparrow falls to the ground, nor a hero perishes in the battle without his notice—that all the evil which can be suffered in this life, and all the good that can be enjoyed, are intended for the best ends—and that, designing men for a better life, God has vouchsafed to send them the purest religion to qualify them for it by its precepts, and the most venerable teacher to animate them by his example—such truths can be perceived more exactly, and will be more exquisitely felt, than all the dark and doubtful doctrines which have been sanctified with the prostituted name of religion—doctrines from which common sense sometimes, and sometimes common humanity recoils, and which are alike shocking to the undebauched simplicity of a child, and the cultivated reason of a man. His admiration will be rapturous but not wild, and his devotion fervent, but not superstitious; every fresh gratification to his curiosity will be attended with fresh conviction to his understanding; and every fresh conviction to his understanding will bring with it fresh improvement to his heart.

Many persons, I am aware, have ostentatiously displayed their talents, and some, I fear, have indirectly vindicated their own secret practices, by intricate and invidious inquiries, whether ignorance or error upon sacred subjects—whether the total forgetfulness of God, or the superstitious fear of him be most pernicious. The propriety of these inquiries I discern not, as we are by no means reduced to either of these most distressing and most alarming alternatives. The utility of them also I am disposed

to controvert, because general questions of this kind are seldom capable of such an exact decision as shall be applicable to real instances in common life. I would further observe, that, without attempting to determine which is the least criminal, we may collect from the express testimony of the disputants themselves, that both are very pernicious. But I will go yet more deeply into this question, because great stress is, I know, laid on it, by those, who, overlooking the safe and middle way, would keep the eye of the inquirer upon one extreme, while their own conduct verges towards the other. I wish you then to remember that these very evils, which in speculation are always stated separately, do in practice tend to generate each other.

For reasons already mentioned to you, it is plain, that some loose and roving ideas of a first superintendant cause will steal into the mind; but as there are no congenial principles to regulate and to fix them, and as the time may unexpectedly come, when the intellect, oppressed by their number, and distracted by their confusion, will make some violent effort to unite and arrange them, in such a case the transition from ignorance to error is easy and almost inevitable. Again, error, which implies in itself an immediate ignorance of the truth, is apt in many circumstances to keep but a feeble hold on the understanding, which at first languishes into a state of supreme indifference, and at last loses every trace of those images, which were once confessedly, and perhaps superficially, impressed. In the same manner, if wearied by a painful servi-

tude to the affections, our reason should make some exertions to rescue us from the servile fear of a Deity, it is too apt to precipitate us into the contrary fault of a deliberate neglect; and deliberate neglect, should our conscience be awakened by a sense of its guilt, may prompt us to flee for protection to servile fear.

You see then the necessity there is for a young mind to steer between these terrible and opposite dangers. Such a task cannot be performed by a child himself, who, in his opinions is as passive, as in his actions he is imitative; and whose mind is every moment acted upon by a variety of causes, which he can seldom resist or comprehend. It is also to be executed by parents themselves, not without unremitted vigilance and activity indefatigable.

Having thus shown the practicability of a rational and useful education in religion, and of course obviated the arguments drawn from the supposed incapacity of youth to be employed in it, I proceed to expose yet other instances of the fallacious reasonings, and inconsistent practices, into which parents are betrayed, when they presume to make the morals of their children a subordinate and remote consideration. Some remarks will be occasionally interwoven, in order to convince you how much your interests in this world, as well as the next, require you to renounce those reasonings, and abandon these pursuits.

That parents should sincerely and solicitously deter their children from those criminal pursuits to which they are themselves addicted, is a degree

of heroic virtue, which even paternal affection is rarely sufficient to produce. The general arguments adduced in favour of religion have little weight with those who have long disregarded them in their own case; some are unwilling to smart under the accusations of their own consciences, which must awaken from their slumber, when we reproach others for the crimes we ourselves commit; and others perhaps, actuated by a base and unnatural jealousy, are unwilling to be excelled by those who are nearest and dearest to them. With such men I fear, it is useless to expostulate; though callous must be that heart, and sottish that understanding, which can hear without emotion that the sins of the children are often to be charged to the seductive example of their father, and that by thus perpetuating the contagion and the misery of wickedness, the guilt of that father becomes more atrocious, and his condemnation will be more severe.

Happy were it for youth, if the contagious influence of parental vices were counterbalanced by the salutary efficacy of parental virtues; but alas, such is the blindness, and such the imperfection of man, that fathers often do not discourage in their children, what they would condemn in themselves, and that they counteract by a foolish fondness the effects of their own better qualities.

It is recorded of Cyrus and Darius, that they were valiant warriors, profound politicians, and illustrious monarchs; but their private negligence tarnished the lustre of their public character. For

by suffering their children to be educated in the nauseous effeminacy and luxurious dissoluteness of the Medes, they brought disgrace upon their posterity, and ruin upon their subjects. Their sons, unaccustomed to labour, and restless under control, were incapable of executing the high office belonging to their station—and indeed how could it be expected, that the man should labour without reluctance, or govern without arrogance, when we reflect on the pampered appetites, the untamed judgments, and unruly passions of the boy? Take care, therefore, that you do not hereafter go down with sorrow and ignominy to your graves, by permitting your children to do with impunity, what you would shudder yourselves to have done. Recollect, that whatever degrades the dignity, impairs also the intrinsic worth of your actions. Be assured that there lurks in you some unsuspected want of zeal in the cause of virtue, if you refuse to extend its influence where the noblest instincts of nature, and the most solemn obligations of religion, call upon you to perpetuate in others the good work, which yourselves have successfully begun.

If expostulations on the danger of vice lose their force upon the obdurate father, let me not plead without effect with the well-meaning and well-informed, when I intreat you to admit his children to the participation of the highest and purest satisfaction which himself can enjoy. In general, the misconduct of children is not, I believe, so much to be imputed to the want of affection in parents,

as to the excess of that affection, and the wrong direction it takes in the choice of our objects. By an infatuation equally fatal and extensive, the error is most frequent where it is big with the heaviest and most outrageous mischiefs.

I will state to you a case which my own experience, alas, will warrant me in pronouncing too common. Propose to a parent some project for preserving his child's innocence, for improving his moral sense, and for enlarging the sphere of their operation; he will secretly despise what, out of regard to decency, he coldly approves; and when the moment of trial is come, he will suffer the impetuous humours of his child, the tumultuous clamour of his acquaintance, and the capricious fashions of the age, to over-rule the best meant, and best supported admonitions. Set before the same man some proposal which respects the temporal welfare of his family, and that tends to the increase of their fortune, or the elevation of their rank, will he then listen with slovenly attention, or well-disguised contempt? Will he put off the attainment of the end proposed to him with all the artifices of self-deceit, and all the multiplied delays of lazy and irresolute procrastination? Rather, will he not embrace with eagerness, and execute with alacrity, whatever is likely to assist him in the execution of his design?

Did you then correct your children's morals with the same diligence with which you polish their exterior manners—did you pay no less regard to their spiritual than their temporal welfare—did you

interest heaven as well as earth in their favour, good God! what fair prospects would open themselves to our view—what flattering hopes might we then form of the rising generation—what prosperity might we promise them here—what glory hereafter?

Let therefore those among you who bear the venerable name of father, frequently and carefully consider, how momentous a trust you have to perform. Children are sent, not to inherit the wealth and honours, not to exercise the undistinguished fondness, or to indulge the blind vanity of their parents; but to act as rational and moral creatures, to become ultimately the subjects of moral reward, and to contribute by their own personal behaviour to the great and comprehensive designs for which you and they and all men are created. They are a sacred deposit, for the use of which you are responsible to the society in which you live, and to the Judge by whom they were delivered to your trust. You are also responsible more immediately to them, since to have brought any creature into being implies an obligation to make that being happy; and what, I beseech you, can contribute so much to this purpose as to form the minds of your children to early habits of virtue—to check every propensity to vice—and to unite them as it were to their heavenly Father by faith and hope—by serious meditation and fervent prayer?

With the neglect of all moral cultivation, there is often mixed a secret suspicion, that your chil-

dren are not arrived at a state of moral agency. If your scheme of excluding all religious knowledge should continue, and no other causes intervene, that state would never arrive. But, be assured, it begins more early, and is more interesting, than you are willing to be persuaded. Think not, therefore, to say within yourselves that their innocence will be their protection, when that innocence must be corrupted, and when your neglect must contribute to that corruption. The Deity conducts the interests of our souls as well as of our bodies, by the instrumentality of his creatures. Hence the very capacity of your children to partake the blessings, which God dispenses to the sons of men, depends in some measure on the pains you employ to *make* them capable, and therefore worthy of such blessings.

In the helplessness of infancy they require God's providence to shield them from danger—amidst the rashness of youth his grace is necessary to fortify them against temptations; but how can you be so weak as to hope for his assistance—so daring as to ask for it, unless you have possessed your children with a pious sense of their dependance upon God—unless you have habituated them to his service, and rendered them the fit objects of his protection? Indeed, your own interests are at stake; for should it please God to prolong your days, it is of importance for you to consider what treatment you will merit, and of course are likely to expect from your offspring. Often may you stand in need of their counsel in perplexity—of

their aid in adversity—of their consolation in sorrow—of their gay and cheering conversations in those hours of lassitude and melancholy, which are the frequent and unavoidable attendants upon old-age. But can you be said to deserve these kind services, if you have neglected to inspire them with thankfulness to their first and greatest benefactor; or can you expect them, if the consequences of that neglect in the corruption of their morals, and the ruin of their fortunes, has made them incapable of serving you? Should your children be wicked, you will incur their reproaches, and—O dreadful mortification to the folly and pride of irreligious parents—even if they are virtuous, you will not be entitled to their respectful gratitude. Mourn you may with them, and for yourselves, while they are tasting the bitter fruits of their sins; but you will neither be permitted, nor often disposed to partake the triumphant rewards of their righteousness.

Parents are, I know, continually employing the language of love to their children, as an excuse for their weakness, and sometimes, I suspect, as a disguise for their indolence. But allowing it to be sincere, can it be honourable, while it operates only as an instinct, which is not only undirected by reason, but averse to it? Can it be meritorious, while it does not operate for the ends, which alone have induced the Creator to implant it in you? Can it be justifiable, when in its effects, it produces mischiefs not less malignant than might be apprehended from the most determined cruelty?

As you often keep religion at a distance from the thoughts of your children, lest you should incur the imputation of rugged austerity and gloomy churlishness, chill their affection, and alienate their confidence, I beseech you to mark well the usual result of this misplaced caution. It weighs, I suspect, with many unthinking parents; and it will most certainly deceive every one of you with whom it weighs. A blind and unprincipled partiality (for I will not debase the name of filial affection) in your favour your children will naturally conceive, if you bear with them in every perverse humour—if you gratify them in every extravagant wish—if you permit them to excel in the petty ornaments of exterior manners—to glitter in the gay circle of fashionable amusements—and in uninterrupted successions to slumber in inactivity, and to revel in dissipation. But the gratification arising from such causes is itself of transient duration, and consequently the affection grounded upon them will be unstable and fleeting. Nay, that affection itself may be in a moment turned into hatred, when they awake from their delusion, and agonize under the punishment of the vices which you have fostered.

Would you then obtain the unfeigned and lasting love of your children, you must endeavour to deserve it; and to deserve it, is the privilege of him who bestows upon them solid and essential kindness—who trains them up to self-respect, which sets them above meanness, and to self-denial, which secures them from vice—and who by these means conducts them to that tranquillity of mind, and that

dignity of character, which to the thoughtless the world cannot give, and from the virtuous, it cannot take away.

The best security that can be obtained for the obedience of children to their parents is their love of God. Conscious of your regard for their real and permanent interests, they will be ashamed of repelling your advice with wanton petulance, or hardy contradiction. They will, as their faculties grow more and more improved, listen to the information you offer them not only with seriousness, but with pleasure; and in following the commands you lay upon them, they will be melted into gratitude for your kindness, and awed into reverence for your authority—a kindness which they know to be directed by wisdom—and an authority, which they feel to be tempered by benevolence. Yes, my brethren, even in this world you will reap the rewards of your labour. The seeds which yourselves have sown—which you have cherished with unwearied toil, and watched with fond anxiety, you will see watered by the kindly dew of heaven. As year rises upon year, you will find it taking deeper root, strengthened with new vigour, and at last flourishing in all the perfection of maturity. But should it perish for want of the culture you were able but not willing to bestow, how different will be the scene! Consider with yourselves—you who are not totally lost to all the principles of a Christian, and all the finer feelings of a parent—consider how dreadful a thought it is for a beloved ruined child to fall into the hands of an offended God. Think,

if you can endure the thought, how it must hereafter deepen your guilt, and aggravate your sorrow, that their ruin is to be ascribed to your unfeeling carelessness, or mistaken indulgence. For if such be the case, if an early inattention to the business of their heavenly Father should terminate in an incurable disinclination, nay a total incapability to perform it, the crimes of your children will rise up in judgment against you; and justly will you be condemned to partake the punishment, which, by not preventing, you have virtually occasioned.

SERMON XXIV A. *

ON THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE.

LUKE xvii. 17.

Were there not ten cleansed; but where are the nine?

THAT the rapture of enjoyment is more transitory, than the anguish of disappointment, and that favours once anxiously expected are imperceptibly disregarded, the experience of every day abounds with proofs equally decisive and lamentable. Hence the stubborn and untractable disposition of the human heart towards its benevolent Creator—the reluctance of some men to acknowledge the reality of his providence—and the captiousness of others in arraigning its dispensations. Has it pleased God, for purposes which, as it is the perfection of his wisdom to discern them, it would be an imperfection in his goodness not to pursue, to visit you with calamities? Your minds are instantly racked with excessive grief; and every reflection you make on the conduct of God is attended with dark suspicion, or desperate defiance. Has the same God rescued you from the galling load of adversity, or poured

* 1779.

down upon you such blessings as you had not the confidence even to ask? When the first transports of joy have subsided, you lose sight, of the hand that protected you; or perhaps with all the insolence of impiety pronounce it your own arm, and your own strength that has gotten the victory.

Whether indeed we are forgetful of the succours received from above, or impatient of that fatherly correction which is ever intended for our advantage, pride may be justly assigned as the cause of these very different effects. That pride is mortified by every situation that lays us under the ignominious necessity of stooping to implore assistance. It is equally mortified even by the attainment of its own ends; because, to stand in need of support, to ask, and to obtain it, are unequivocal proofs, that the weakness of man is insufficient to his well-being — to avert impending evil, or to secure solid good. Thus our innocence is ensnared on every side, while in adversity we are preyed upon by discontent, and in prosperity we suffer ourselves to be hardened into insensibility.

But the inconsistencies, as well as the crimes of men, even in points of acknowledged and supreme importance, almost mock description. Few among you are so captious as to doubt, and still fewer who are frantic enough to deny these abstract propositions — that God is more ready to hear than we to pray—or that he is accustomed to bestow what we have neither the wisdom to ask, or the merit to claim. But does the exterior conduct of men, or does even their secret conviction, in particular cases

coincide with this general confession? Far from it. Your confidence is tumultuous and transient—it is the result not so much of vigorous and reasonable hope, as of wild and abject fear. Roused you may be by the terrors of the Lord; for we read of the Israelites, that when he slew them, they sought him and turned them early and inquired after God. But you are seldom melted by his mercies; for it is recorded of the same Israelites, that when his wrath was turned away, they thought not of his hand, and of the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

When God has conferred upon us what we do not ask, we seldom form the slightest connection between the giver and the gift. When he grants what we do ask, the impressions of gratitude, though lively, are not lasting; and when he refuses it, we are apt to call in question, not the propriety of our request, but the benevolence of him who alone can foresee the evil consequences of complying with it. But further; if you consult the subtle researches of philosophers, you will be told, that the most costly sacrifices, and the most importunate supplications are utterly inefficacious—that we may, however, perceive, and therefore ought to acknowledge the wisdom of those counsels, which we cannot influence—that prayer may be permitted, but that thanksgiving is commanded. From these refined and I hope mistaken speculatists, turn your eyes to the mass of mankind, and you will find that many, who would reject such tenets as big with impiety, are yet actuated by principles more dishonourable to God, and more dangerous to man. For,

consider, I beseech you, even, where your success is supposed to be in some measure the consequence of your petitions, we see that men the keenest in their addresses to God, are often the most languid in their acknowledgments to him. Instead of perpetuating by reflection the calm and pure satisfaction which past blessings may excite, they are pushing forward to seize such as are future and additional. Instead of indulging the honest and generous triumphs of gratitude, they give way to that anxious impatience, or that gloomy distrust, which too often accompanies the devotions of the selfish.

I will not balance the comparative merits of him who conscientiously abstains from prayer, and of him who against conscience omits thanksgiving. Yet while I admit the principles of the latter, I must partially approve the conduct of the former, for surely there is consistence at least between his professions and his actions, which marks sincerity. There is an air of profound reverence for the majesty of Almighty God, of unreserved trust in his providence, and of actual sensibility to his kindness, which ought to shelter him from the imputation of deliberate impiety. At all events, he holds a higher rank in the scale of reason and religion, than the inconsistent, capricious Christian, who, while he contends for the efficacy and the necessity of praying, neglects the very duty, without which it is a mere mockery to pray. For mockery it is of the most glaring kind to ask for more, when we have ceased to be grateful for the much we have asked and received. I cannot perceive any other species

of inconsistence equally common and indefensible in the behaviour of men towards God.

However the rigour of abstract speculation may compel us to associate the attribute of goodness with that of power, the generality of mankind at least in their habits of thinking are apt either to separate them, or to admit that goodness with the coldness of assent, not the fervour of affection—to contemplate that power with abject dread, not with generous reverence—to accept indeed with indifference, or perhaps seize with eagerness all that God can bestow, but not to consider the bestowal at all as a dispensation, by which the dignity of him who confers is in some measure communicated to him who receives. Hence we are seldom solicitous to feel that elevation of mind which must arise from the consciousness of enjoying, and of endeavouring to deserve, his protection who is the great and merciful governor of the universe. Instead of measuring the value of his favours by their immediate or final utility to ourselves, we impertinently and enviously examine the extent in which others are permitted to share them; and as the haughty Jews paid little regard to a discovery which was vouchsafed to them in common with the despised Samaritans, so we consider ourselves as little indebted to Almighty God for blessings which he has not refused to those against whom, justly or unjustly, we have conceived disgust, contempt, or resentment.

From these general reflections on the defects of mankind in the noble and easy duty of thankfulness, I turn to the striking instance of ingratitude which

is recorded in my text. In the further prosecution of my subject I shall explain to you at large the circumstances of the recovery granted to the lepers, and I shall occasionally intersperse such moral reflections as may preserve you from the same guilt, when you have received the same or similar mercies.

The sufferers, who were the objects of that compassion, which was ever alive to the distresses of mankind, met our Lord at his entrance into a village, and stood, says St. Luke, afar off. This fact is introduced not less pertinently than pathetically. It points out the peculiar severities of a disorder, which banished those who fell into it from the society of their fellow-creatures, exposed them to abhorrence, even while it entitled them to pity, cut off all the means of relief, and all the hope of consolation, and added the gloom of solitude to the pangs of disease. Nothing could set the worth of a pure heart and unblemished conduct in a more advantageous point of view than the consideration that the impure, even in body, were unworthy to enter his presence. This thought must have acquired greater solemnity from the declaration, which deprived the leper of all intercourse with mankind; and it must have struck the Jews with all the force of habit, as they daily saw numbers of the defiled, deserted, helpless sufferers. The lepers, who had heard the pretensions of Christ, and probably had seen his miracles, immediately implore his protection in this short, but moving address — Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us.

The Evangelist proceeds—and when he saw them, he said—go, show yourselves to the priests; and it came to pass, that as they went they were cleansed. *And when he saw them*—mark, I beseech you now how quick are the springs—how forcible the movements of that pity, which reigned in the breast of your Saviour. No sooner does he perceive their sufferings than he determines to alleviate them—their faith than he engages to reward it. At the same time, you will observe, that the exertions of benevolence by no means interfere with the dictates of prudence, and that while he establishes the validity of his own claims, he preserves a strict and exemplary regard for the instructions of Moses. He lays no schemes for popular applause; he avoids all appearance of setting up his own authority against that of the Jewish legislator. He at once guards against the misconstructions of his enemies, and converts the gratitude of his friends to the most valuable and becoming purposes. He bids the lepers show themselves to the priest, that by virtue of his office, the cure might be authoritatively ascertained, and publicly announced. If you consult the various methods of purification which, in the 14th of Leviticus, were imposed upon those who were cured from leprosy, you will find them supremely wise and good. For as the infection disqualified them from joining in the solemn worship of God, the removal of that infection was attended by a formal, open admission into his temple. This admission too was accompanied by a sacrifice

on the part of those who were cured, which was both an acknowledgment of the mercies they had already received, and a condition of their approaching right to the civil and religious privileges of their countrymen. Not less striking marks of wisdom you will find in the authentic declaration of the priest, that the leper was made sound. It linked together the rules of policy with the duties of religion. It procured a kind and honourable reception to the person who was recovered, and at the same time lifted up the attention of the Jews to that Almighty power, by which alone the recovery could be established.

Among other circumstances of judgment united with mercy in this command of Christ, I must point out one, which, however incidental and subordinate it may appear, was very important to those whom it more directly concerned. Among the ten was one Samaritan. Now an opinion engendered probably by superstition, and fostered by vanity, had grown up among the Jews, that the Samaritans had incurred the combined guilt of hypocrisy and of apostacy—that their professions of reverence for the Jewish legislator were treacherous—and their partial observance of his law an abomination to God. Hence they usurped a right of treating them with the most outrageous disdain; they industriously shunned all intercourse in public and in private, and, like other bigots in other ages, perversely annexed an idea of merit to their own haughtiness of contempt, and inhumanity

of persecution. But Christ gave no countenance to these groundless and invidious distinctions. On the contrary, he, by his answer, decides the cause that had long been agitated between the contending parties; he corrects the mistakes of the Samaritan, by sending one of their countrymen to Jerusalem—not Mount Gerizim—and he humbles the arrogance of the Jew, by permitting a stranger to join in their worship.

The Evangelist tells us, that as they went they were cleansed. Now it is probable that these men, who asked for assistance at the hands of Christ, differed from each other in their moral character as well as their religious profession. The Jew was mingled by his sufferings with the Samaritan, and the good man with the bad. But the merciful Jesus did not permit these real and important distinctions to operate on such an occasion. One common act of faith cancelled all their demerits; and one common degree of misfortune brought them within the reach of Christ's mercy. Consider then the comprehensive, as well as the active compassion of our Master. Were the pangs only of the virtuous sufferer alleviated? Was the prayer even of one unheard? Were not the ten cleansed, indiscriminately and immediately cleansed? After hearing this question, could you conceive any room left for that which follows? Your regard for the honour of human nature, and the warmth of your affection for the benevolence of its blessed redeemer, would at first lead you, no doubt, to pronounce it impos-

sible. I join with you in your honest wishes that it were so. But the same Scriptures which record the disorders and the recovery of nine, record also their shocking ingratitude. But where, says Christ, are the nine? When the Jews betrayed such obstinacy of temper, and such unfeelingness of heart—when they so suddenly forgot the favours they had so recently experienced, I am sure the most corrupt among my hearers will acknowledge the conduct of these ingrates to be inexcusable; and I am equally sure the most virtuous may find in Christ's reproof some lesson that bids him look back into himself. It reminds you, that all of you, like the lepers, have groaned under affliction—it tells you, that like them you have solicited and received succour from above—and it should be a warning to you, lest, like them, you forget the gracious author of your happiness—that being to whom you are indebted for all that you enjoy, and for more than you deserve. Some, perhaps, have agonized on the bed of sickness, where the assistance of false friends has been refused to you, or the efforts of your sincerest well-wishers, your nearest and dearest relations, your most skilful physicians have been exerted in vain. Others have been alarmed at the approach of dangers which threatened ruin to your fortunes, or your characters. In various measures, and at various times, you have all been oppressed with sorrow, or entangled in difficulty. I flatter myself that in these critical situations, your sincere, earnest prayers have been addressed to the throne of grace;

and I doubt not but these prayers have been assisted, accepted, rewarded. But, my brethren, has your gratitude always borne an exact proportion to the goodness of your God? Have you never received those favours with coldness, which you once solicited with ardour? Have you not sometimes seized the bounty of heaven as a right, which you might demand—not a mercy which you had implored? Have you never in the intoxication of success lost sight of the real causes from which it sprang, and traced it up only to the point whither pride leads the way—to the depth of your own counsels, and the activity of your own endeavours? But however the supposed strength of such apologies may lull your minds with false security, or swell them with presumptuous self-approbation, they are extravagantly absurd, as well as most profligately wicked.

It will, perhaps, be said, that years have elapsed since the bestowal of some things, or that new favours have in a manner obliterated the sense of old ones. Have years elapsed since you have been the object of divine bounty? If you have hitherto delayed your gratitude, the obligations for you to express it are doubly cogent, and that too with double alacrity; and if your gratitude be already began, what motives can induce you to discontinue it? Is it that we are fearful lest our returns should more than counterbalance the bounty of our maker? This is impossible. Or is it that the acknowledgments of having received protection from the kindest and greatest of protectors bring with them such a mortification to

our pride, that we are unwilling to repeat them? This I fear is too possible; for the very reason which made the former supposition impossible—for the most shameful of all reasons, because we cannot return, we will not acknowledge them.

A deep inquirer into the heart of man has observed, beneficia eo usque læta sunt, dum videntur exsolvi posse; ubi multum antevenêre pro gratiâ odium redditur—kindnesses are pleasing only so long as we have a prospect of repaying them; when they exceed the power of returning them, we pay back hatred instead of thanks. Between creatures of the same species, this horrid malignity may be accounted for from the pride, which shrinks at the consciousness of external inferiority; but no such comparison ever entered the heart of man towards the Deity, and yet with stoical inconsistence, and stoical haughtiness he acknowledges the power of a God, and disdains to become the subject of it—nay, he asks, as they did, for external blessings, for life and wealth; and then strives not to cultivate, as they did strive, a virtuous mind from the strength of his own faculties. To the negligence of him who keeps back the tribute of praise, and the arrogance of him who is pained by paying it, let us oppose the spirited declaration of the Psalmist—it is a joyful thing to be thankful. Let me add, that it is no mean proof of the Divine wisdom and benevolence—no considerable argument for the dignity of human nature, that feelings the most acceptable in his sight, are also the most delightful to ourselves. The Persians, we are informed, held it

more honourable to receive than give; and surely it is easy to conceive a situation in which it is not less meritorious; for he that confers indulges the best suggestions of his pride, and he that receives is sometimes obliged to subdue its worst.

As to the other excuse, it is so contradictory to common sense, and so irreconcileable to common justice, that those who are capable of admitting it, are, I fear, incapable of amending their folly, or even perceiving it. The repeated, unmerited blessings showered down upon us, may with great propriety be urged as a proof that all our attempts to be grateful are extremely inadequate; but when they are insisted upon as an exemption from any attempt to be so; when it is argued—for to this the consequences of the argument amount—that the more God gives, the less we are to thank him, the understanding must have been seduced by the corruptions of the heart. In this holy temple you have repeatedly offered up thanks to Almighty God for creating you out of nothing—for preserving you from innumerable accidents, which your own wisdom could not have foreseen—for furnishing you with many advantages which your own industry could not have attained—and above all, for vouchsafing to you, through the gospel of his son, the means of grace in this world, and the hopes of glory in another. But does the sense of the mercies you here acknowledge attend you, when you leave the house of worship? Does it prevent you from plunging too far into the cares, or rioting in the pleasures

of this life? Does it sanctify every principle, and exalt every aim? The first appeal to your conscience will tell you that it does not. And should this be the case, where is the difference between your behaviour and that of the lepers, whom your Saviour has already condemned, and whom yourselves dare not acquit? I will answer for you, and in terms not of enthusiastic declamation, but of plain, sober reason. The difference is only nominal; or rather it is real, to your shame. They were Jews; but you are, or at least profess to be, Christians. They forgot one favour, you forget many. They had only received a bodily cure; you have been instructed, encouraged, and supported in securing the interests of your immortal souls — your conduct in supposed cases may be known from your conduct in real; and depend upon it, if you are ungrateful under your own present circumstances, in those of the lepers you would not have been grateful. In your own circumstances, indeed, there never can be a time, in which the thanks of a Christian are improper or unacceptable; nor is there any case, that does not abundantly supply materials for thankfulness. Not a week passes over your heads, in which some unexpected good has not befallen you, or in which you have not been delivered from some expected evil—not a day rolls along in which the wonderful scheme of redemption may not become more efficacious in strengthening your faith, in exercising your piety, and animating your hope. Not a moment is there, in which the protection of that provi-

dence which prolongs your existence has been withdrawn.

But you will say, that the lepers were cured by a miracle; whereas the blessings, which have come within the circle of your experience, arose in the general course of things. Be it so; but is not the general course of things placed under the direction of the very being by whom miracles are performed? True it is, that human causes, which co-operate with the one, are quiescent in the other. But what follows? That God is unconcerned—nay, that he is not equally concerned? I say equally; for those human means are only a species of causes which, like the miraculous, derive their efficacy from divine appointment solely, and which contain perhaps higher and more full proofs of God's righteous attributes than miracles can afford. Do not startle at this observation; for however they may clash with your narrow prejudices, they rest upon the firmest foundations of good sense and piety. Miracles are confined to a few particular persons, and to a few particular ages; but the salutary effects of those causes which constitute what is called the general providence of God, are of all ages and all causes. Miracles instantaneously strike the beholder with astonishment; the events of common life, when seriously and attentively surveyed—when traced up to their original source, and pursued through all their beneficial consequences, supply more abundant materials for wonder as (well as) thankfulness. Miracles are most proper and convincing attestations to the credibility of a teacher

sent from God; but from the events of common life we deduce the existence of God himself, and the operations of those attributes, to which, as previously established by natural religion, revealed always appeals. When miracles are worked, we may adore and love the being who ordains them; but if they had never existed, we might, in our observation of what God is doing for others, and in our experience of what he has done for ourselves, discover numberless and urgent reasons for reposing in him our confidence, and for honouring him with our praise.

Had you, like the Samaritan, received a cure from the Son of God, would not your hearts have glowed with gratitude and devotion? There is equal cause for gratitude and devotion when you receive any great mercy through the materials, which God has created for your preservation, and the knowledge of applying them, which he has also communicated. The instrument is different; but the first mover is the same. The stages between your cure, and him that ordained it, are more numerous; but the preserver is the same. The method of receiving it is different; but the uses of it when received are the same. Though a cure received by a miracle might act most powerfully on our imagination, the same cure would be attended with the same conviction of God's mercy, if viewed as a part of his ordinary dispensations by your reason.

I have pursued this inquiry minutely, because the fallacy against which it is directed is not unfrequent. All that I request is, that in a case

where you are so nearly interested, you would give these considerations an impartial and diligent attention.

To dispute then is presumption—to overlook these truths is folly—and yet among those who now hear me, some I am sure are too obdurate, or too thoughtless, to honour God at all; others praise him with their lips, while their thoughts stray far from him; and the best of you, it may be feared, are too apt to be satisfied with the expression of your obligations at stated periods, and in terms of mere form. I will not trifle with you, my brethren, and I beseech you not to trifle with yourselves, on a subject of such infinite moment.

Wheresoever the flame of gratitude is not lasting as well as violent—when the sincere, habitual sense of God's mercy ceases to influence your lives—when you can at will stifle the remembrance of the divine favours, or remember them with langour and unconcern — then the condemnation implied in my text will overtake you — then you will assuredly be ranked among those ungrateful nine, who forgot their Saviour's benefits upon earth, and their God in heaven.

From this melancholy scene you will gladly attend me to the more pleasing prospect, that the opposite can hold up to your admiration. And one of them when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God; and he fell down on his face before the feet of Jesus, and gave him thanks, and he was a Samaritan. If we cast our eyes around the world without an inclination to find

it worse than it actually is, we shall discover the proportion between such as forget, and such as remember God, to be nearly similar to that which the Evangelist mentions. Ten are cleansed, of whom nine go away, and one returns to glorify his creator. But however the conviction of a gracious providence may be overwhelmed by our business, or dissipated by our amusements, the fact itself still remains indisputable—here are all cleansed. Numerous and self-sufficient as are the patrons of vice, virtue is yet justified for her children. It is true, one only gives thanks, but to the merits of that one, though he was a stranger, the Son of God has borne a most illustrious testimony—arise, go thy way; thy faith has made thee whole. Every one that hears this sentence must feel its justness; and every one, who is acquainted with the Christian terms of salvation, knows that whoever imitates the example may appropriate the commendation.

To such therefore as, like the Samaritan, have been afflicted, and comforted under affliction — to such as look back to past kindness with his zealous gratitude, and implore with his pious confidence, any farther arguments are superfluous—to all such I may promptly and effectually address myself, in the emphatical and encouraging language of your Saviour—go, and do thou likewise.

SERMON XXV A.*

THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

MATTHEW xxii. 14.

For many are called, but few are chosen.

THE detached portions of parables are frequently, and, I think, properly compared to the materials of a building, which, viewed from a just distance, and placed in that nice arrangement where the symmetry of parts gives effect to a whole, impress upon the mind the clearest and most captivating idea of beauty and order; but torn asunder retain every gross and hideous form which the most undisciplined imagination can conceive, or the most unskilful hand can execute. Thus in the parable of the marriage-feast there is a regular unity of design, to which all the circumstances enumerated in it are in various degrees subservient, and in reference to which, the words of the text have a very marked and consummate propriety; but, separately considered, they have been the occasion of racking disquietude, and error almost insuperable to many minds, bewildered by superstition, or involved in ignorance. For they have been supposed to contain

* 1779.

the most direct and explicit testimony in favour of predestination—so direct and explicit, that no criticism can invalidate, and no sophistry explain it away. Of you, who now hear me, it would be uncharitable and even indecorous to suppose, that any are enslaved to an absurd and pernicious doctrine, which not only shakes the fundamental proofs of natural religion, but lessens all the moral obligations of revealed. Yet, as some uneasiness and some uncertainty may dwell in the bosoms of those who, while they shrink from the general notion, are staggered by particular evidences adduced to uphold it, I shall set before you a plain and instructive illustration of the parable, to which these words are annexed, and then by refuting the supposed connection in which they do not, and laying open the real connexion in which they do, stand with the context, I shall endeavour to soften those harsh features of the text itself, which at first sight, I am aware, are so perplexing to the illiterate, and so alarming to the pious.

It may not be improper, however, to state two preliminary observations, which may assist us in gaining a clear and exact view of such other passages, as resemble the doctrine conveyed, or the terms employed in the parable that lies before us. Now, according to the appropriate and consistent language of scripture, the kingdom of the Father is, I think, often distinguished from the kingdom of the heavens. The one expression seems to be of Jewish, the other of Christian origin; the one points to the final state of good men, the other

to that religious dispensation, which qualifies them for obtaining, and encourages them in hoping for it. In the second place, I would observe, that the imagery of a feast is used by the sacred writers to signify both; and it may not be impertinent to add, that this phraseology is not peculiar to the scriptures; for, without calling in the aid of similar passages, which occur in several Greek poets, and in an ancient Greek philosopher, I think it sufficient to remind you that Virgil, in one of his eclogues, and Horace, in one of his odes, have adopted the same metaphor, in describing the exalted state of those persons, who, from the splendour of their characters, were admitted into the presence of the Gods.

We now proceed to the state of the parable—to explain its various parts, and thus gradually lead you into the fair and full import of the text itself.

The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a feast, which a king (or rather a nobleman) had made for his son. His servants are sent to call them who were bidden, and they would not come. Again, he sends forth other servants, who in terms of stronger importunity endeavoured to hasten their arrival, and who in the most engaging forms of description, represented the oxen and fatlings as killed, and all things as ready. But one went to his farm, another to his merchandize, and the rest were so unmoved by the kindness, and so unawed by the authority, of him who invited them, that they treated spitefully, and even barbarously slew, his servants. The king with just and terrible rage, sent forth his armies and slew them. The wedding, says he, is ready, but

they who were bidden, are not worthy. Go ye into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. They gather the good and the bad, and the wedding is furnished with guests. One man, however, had not on a wedding garment. The king commands him to be cast into outer darkness. Then follows the text, for many are called, but few are chosen.

Now the kingdom of heaven implies the Gospel published by Jesus Christ, enlightened by his doctrine, confirmed by his miracles, adorned by his virtues, and sealed with his most precious blood. The feast represents that kingdom from its primary institution, through all its successive stages, up to its final completion. The servants first sent are Moses and the prophets, who followed him in the early parts of the Jewish economy, and by whom the minds of the Jewish nation were to be prepared by degrees for the brighter hopes and purer laws of the Gospel. They who would not come are the obstinate and stiff-necked Jews, who often relapsed into the impure tenets of polytheism, and the odious ceremonies of idolators. The servants sent again to invite them are partly the later prophets, in whose writings there are clearer predictions concerning the promised Messiah, and more brilliant descriptions of the glories that were to be displayed in his approaching kingdom; and partly, under the same appellation we must rank our blessed Lord himself, and his immediate disciples, by whom God's covenanted mercies were more graciously offered, and more authoritatively proclaimed.

They who slew them are the later Jews, who it seems were more bigotted even than their forefathers to the dead letter of the law, whose understandings had been perverted by the coarse and mutilated notions of philosophy which they had gathered up during the captivity, and whose spirits were rendered more stubborn and more ferocious by the temporary suspension of their religious and civil immunities. Hence they turned a deaf ear to the mild and courteous invitations, and even to the solemn and awful remonstrances of our holy Redeemer. They imputed his wonderful acts of power and mercy to the agency of Beelzebub. They dragged the Saviour of the world to an ignominious death on the cross, and they harrassed with unrelenting severity all who were melted by his benevolence, all who were astonished at his wisdom, and all who in the gloomy hour of persecution yet adhered to his cause. When the king is said to send forth his armies, we are to understand that God made the Romans the instruments of his offended justice upon the Jews, for after many contentions and much bloodshed a siege of Jerusalem was commenced, in the course of which, and the war immediately preceding it, no less than eleven hundred thousand men are known to have perished amidst the distresses of famine, and the havock of the sword. After this, God sent his servants into the high-ways, and directs them to ask all whom they should find, for he was unwilling that so noble and costly an entertainment should be prepared in vain. That is, the Apostles and first propagators of Christianity

are commissioned to go into the Gentile world, in order to spread wider the tidings of salvation; and the heathens, it seems, to whom this invitation was first addressed, were not so negligent and ungrateful as the Jews, to whom it had been repeatedly offered. They came from the east and the west, and from the north and the south; the fiery African, the luxurious Asiatic, the ferocious German, the fastidious Greek, and the imperious Roman, embraced the benevolent proffer of everlasting happiness, and bowed the knee before the cross of their Saviour. Thus the Gospel flourished in many countries; it was read in many languages, it was gradually received under the protection of many states—or, in other words, the wedding was furnished with guests.

And one came in, that had not on a wedding garment. I must here stop to explain some circumstances to which there is a proper and manifest allusion in the parable.

The Jews are known in past, and even in present times, to celebrate their marriages with great splendour. The feasts usually continued six or seven days. Their most intimate friends and nearest relations were bidden. The time of holding them was night, and the custom was for every attendant to wear a purple garment out of respect to the parties, and as a mark of the distinction shown to himself by the invitation. Now as our blessed Lord knew these ceremonies well, and as he addressed the parable to those who practised them, no room was left for misapprehension in their minds, and a little attention

will equally secure us from mistake. The want of a wedding-garment, considered in reference to one who came in from the high-ways implies a wavering, a languid, or corrupt faith, the want of a steady spirit, or an honest heart. The person who wanted it was one of the Gentiles, to whom the Gospel was preached after it had been rejected by the Jews. The sentence of driving him into outer darkness implies the punishment, whatever it might be, which was due to his crimes. And then follows the text, which says, not only in relation to those who came in last, but to those who would not come in at all, many are called, but few are chosen. Here however I must beg of you to observe that the expression of outer darkness does not necessarily imply the gloomy and wretched mansions of the damned. But how can this be? Outer darkness, you will say, is terrible to the imagination, and the terrors of the description are heightened by what our Lord adds — there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Very true; but the allusion is yet preserved to Jewish customs; it signifies the darkness that was out of the house, within which the wedding is celebrated with a display of grandeur, and in cheerfulness of heart. Hence the gnashing of teeth emphatically and exactly describes the extreme mortification of a guest, who wishing to partake of the feast, and having entered into the room, was rejected from it with every aggravated indignity, for the want of a proper qualification. So that the expression of darkness does not surely mean the darkness of hell, but the darkness of night, in which the degraded

and expelled guest was condemned to wander. We are required by every rule of fair criticism to explain and limit the expression by the allusive spirit in which the parable is related; and we are forbidden, I think, by our religious reverence, as well as by our natural sensibilities, to force the text into a severer meaning. Mistake me not. I have no wish to colour over the guilt of him who had not on a wedding garment, and I shall not attempt to appreciate the exact degree of rigour in his punishment. Far be it from me to soothe the fears of any sinner; but in pointing those fears to their proper object, and stretched up to their proper tone, I give them a fuller, a more permanent, and a more salutary effect. I attend to the real constitution of human nature, and I do not contradict the letter or the spirit of the word of God.

I must desire you moreover, to mark the various gradations, and discriminating circumstances of guilt recorded in the parable. Upon those to whom the invitation was offered, and by whom it was first refused, we do not hear that any punishment was inflicted. When the deity did not suffer his gracious purpose to be impeded by the unfeeling and unthankful conduct of his creatures, he repeats his invitation in stronger terms, and behold, the ingratitude of man seems to rise in proportion to the goodness of God. The second offer was not merely rejected, but the rejection is accompanied by overt-acts of most unmerited and violent cruelty to those who delivered it. Even the crime which is mentioned last in the order of the narrative, was not the

blackest in point of criminality. Great, doubtless, was the guilt of coming without a wedding garment; but the guilt of slaying the king's servants was greater. Accordingly the punishment of the one was only to be driven ignominiously from the feast; but the punishment of the other was, that the king sent forth his armies and destroyed them.

Now as you do not suppose the torments of eternity to be meant by the latter words, is it fair and consistent to suppose them implied in the former, which are less severe?

The plain truth is, that in neither case the future judicial dispensations of God are directly pointed out; but this most intelligible and most useful lesson is conveyed to us—that when the Deity holds forth his favours in vain—when we refuse to accept them—or when, having accepted, we proceed to abuse them, they are withdrawn from us; and according to our different degrees of guilt, God exercises different degrees of severity.

History records some facts by which we may understand the penalties incurred by those who slew the king's servants; and it were easy to state a supposed case, by which we may judge of the sentence denounced against him, who had not on the wedding garment. God has given to us, who are among the last that were admitted to the feast, the bright and steady directions of the Gospel; but should he suffer us again to be plunged in the thick darkness of heathen idolatry, or guided (as countries once professing Christianity are) by the baleful and glimmering light of Mahometanism, would you not

think our situation deplorable, though our country should not be destroyed, as that of the Jews was, by a host of invincible enemies, and visited with all the dreadful calamities of war. Surely you would shudder at the prospect of being driven from the feast, though the king should not send his armies among you.

As a further proof that the text does not allude to the last and solemn judgment of all mankind, we may observe, that as one only came in without a wedding garment, the number representing those, who in the gentile world may fall short of the divine favour is not sufficient; but if we carry back our attention to all the guests who were summoned, and suppose the punishments to be of a temporal nature, then the number of those who resisted the summons, justifies the proportion stated in my text, between those who are called and those who are chosen.

After these remarks on the affairs to which the temporal judgments of God were directed, and the gradations by which they are discriminated, I should proceed to explain what my text *does* mean, as a general inference from the whole, were it not proper for me previously to observe what it does *not* mean, considered as connected only with the fate of the person who had not a wedding garment. Where then, let us ask, do we hear that the man was predestinated to his offence; or that he is condemned for any involuntary and inevitable sin? He knew that he ought to have had on a wedding-garment—he came without it, and the fault was palpably

and solely his own; but he was not cast out in consequence of any arbitrary and irreversible decree on the part of the king. He that asked meant to have entertained him; he that called would also have chosen him, if he had been properly prepared. But, exclaims the predestinarian, he that is once called is saved for ever; for the call is accompanied by appropriate and unequivocal indications that it comes from God — by an unshaken affiance that our sins are forgiven — by an efficacious grace that sanctifies our actions. In opposition to all these groundless assumptions, and all this senseless jargon, I bring forward the plain declaration of the text, and distorted, even as the predestinarian himself would wish to have it, in its application, and referred only to the case of him who had not a wedding garment — for he certainly was called, and he as certainly was not chosen. Now if you do not allow the distinction, that a man may be called and yet not be chosen, you abandon, or rather demolish, a text which stands among the strongest outworks of predestination, and perhaps is more tenable than the citadel itself. If you do allow the distinction, and add that God professes to call those whom he does not intend to choose — that he who foresees and determines the event, has also prepared the train of causes, which are to produce it — that he excites hopes which he will not permit us to gratify, and sports with the weakness of his creatures under the colour of punishing their sins — to what does this amount? My indignation and horror at the doctrine do not carry me, I hope, beyond the reverence which is due

to the Being who is the subject of it, when I say that it imputes to the deity the forms of judicial proceedings without the spirit of justice itself—the baseness of treachery without its dexterity—the malignity of cruelty without the provocations or interests which impel other beings to be cruel—the wantonness of oppression without the dignity of power.

Were we to grant the premises that the concluding words in the parable, have a retrospect only to the person who was found not to wear a wedding garment and his companions, the reasons already adduced are sufficient to crush every consequence that favours the vulgar notions of unconditional election. And surely we do not press our analogical argument too far, when, in conformity to the preceding circumstances of the parable, we contend that the whole relates, not to the final doom of mankind, but to the religious dispensations of the Deity, in the publication of a law, the privileges of which some men are, and some are not permitted to share —which to some is communicated earlier, and to others later—which by some is embraced, and by others rejected—which to some, from their moral qualifications is, and to others from the want of them, is not the instrument of salvation.

The inconsistencies of ignorance leagued with spiritual pride are endless, and weary reason itself in the career of its triumphs over error. Let us, however, point out one more instance in which the text, upon the principles of those who mistake it, fails to justify the mischievous use to which it is often ap-

plied, to the great dismay of well-meaning Christians, and the great dishonour of Christianity itself. For if we should for a moment admit that it does point to a future judgment, the fair and obvious deduction to be made from it is the very reverse of that, which rash and misguided enthusiasts are so prone to expect and eager to enforce. Many persons are collected from the high-ways and the hedges, and even the good and the bad are admitted, and sit down at the feast. But we hear of one, and of one only, who was cast into outer darkness; and this too, not from any arbitrary rejection pronounced by the master of the feast, but through his own voluntary misbehaviour. Now, if only one was cast out, the text does not indirectly countenance the gloomy descriptions, and frantic assertions of those, who suppose that they do honour to God, when they represent the greater part of his creatures as cut off from his favour. If only one was cast out, it cannot be said of the persons with whom he sat down, that many are called, but few are chosen; for of all that were called, according to this hypothesis, all were chosen except one; and for the rejection of this one a specific, an adequate and a just reason is assigned—because he had not on a wedding garment.

In the foregoing interpretation I have intentionally not availed myself of such aid as might easily be drawn from verbal criticism, or metaphysical distinction. I have spoken in common language the dictates of common sense. From the whole of the parable perspicuously, I hope, and impartially ex-

plained, I have reasoned on that which appears to be the meaning of the text, and by comparing the words themselves, even with the part of the parable immediately preceding, I have shown, upon the predestinarian's own limitations, what the meaning cannot be.

In respect to the comparative number of those who will, or will not be saved in the last day, religion does not authorize us to form an unfavourable opinion, and humanity surely inclines us to hope, that as the present life, amidst all its anxious cares, all its galling disappointments, all its moral, all its physical imperfections, is, on the whole, friendly to virtue and happiness; the scenes to be hereafter disclosed, will terminate in the greatest possible good to the greater part of our species. As to the fact itself, the Scriptures are silent; and confident I am that the text, either according to the inconsistencies of the interpretation I oppose, or according to the plain and obvious one, which many approve, furnishes not the slightest information. Instead, therefore, of torturing the words of our Lord in order to support our own wild and fierce decisions about the pains of hell, we should have rather recourse to history, and consider how far the lenient explanation which I have recommended, is made probable by the course of God's providence in the religious government of his creatures during the present life.

But the text, you will reply, says plainly and peremptorily, that many are called, and few are chosen. It does so, and in reference to all the parties enu-

merated in the parable, to those who, at various times, and in various forms were bidden, the assertion is to me intelligible. Consider how frequently the Jews deserted or violated the law—how long, and how obstinately they resisted the Gospel—consider how many difficulties obstructed its progress through the countries where it is now believed—consider how many nations yet sit in darkness, and how large a portion of the world which once were blessed with the light, are now deprived of it—and above all, consider how many who profess it by their words, dishonour it by their actions. But many of you are called, and no wonder is it that few have been yet chosen, when the offers of salvation are so little regarded by those who hear them, and so much slighted by others, who will not listen to them at all.

You see then, that I consider the text as referring to the whole parable—that with this reference there is nothing very hyperbolical or improbable in the assertion that few were chosen—and that, according to the opinions of those who would narrow the premises to the condition of the persons who were last bidden, the narrative is at open and direct variance with the conclusion. You see further, that neither from the less punishment of him who was cast into outer darkness for the want of a wedding garment, nor from the greater punishment of those who were destroyed by the king's armies because they had slain his servants, are we authorised to form any minute calculations, or any general hypothesis on the number of those who will be con-

demned or rewarded in the great and awful day of judgment; and finally, you see that, as all these offences of all the parties were voluntary, the text cannot, without the most glaring absurdity, and even the most desperate presumption, be pressed into the service of those, who call themselves the advocates of election and predestination.

To conclude. It has ever been my fixed persuasion, that in the explanation of parables, the peculiar and distinguishing genius of the composition itself, the main and ultimate views of the speaker, and the local and national circumstances of the audience should be carefully observed, and that no doctrine of great pith and moment should ever be extorted from particular and detached passages alone. Those passages are sometimes allusive to manners, and clothed with metaphor; they are employed sometimes to decorate, and sometimes to enforce. They suggest, but rarely establish, some collateral truth. They illustrate the general meaning; they invigorate the general effect; but they occupy too narrow a space, and they are composed of materials too scanty and too brittle to support those large and irregular, and ponderous superstructures, which are often heaped upon them by fanatics—by dogmatists—by zealots without knowledge, and bigots without charity. And sure I am, that the text we have just been considering, when wrenched away from the main body of the parable, is not sufficient to form a foundation, so broad and so seated, that we may rest upon it all the complicated and comprehensive principles of God's religious govern-

ment, and all the eternal interests of all those beings who are the subjects of that government in all countries, both within and without the pale of Christianity, and in all ages, both before and after its publication.

To the great and general scope of parables, therefore, our attention should be chiefly directed; and with the result of this alone, whether it be a precept to regulate our practice, or a proposition to exercise our faith, we should always be contented. Now the evident and direct design of the parable before us is, to show that God's benevolent purposes to establish the Gospel were often counteracted, that the Jews were punished for their contumacious rejection of it, and that though Gentiles are among those who were admitted to the feast, all were not worthy of partaking it. The indirect and more extensive application of it may show that God is gracious, though man be unthankful, that he offers his favours to all, and that many will not accept them; that his approbation will be conferred on those who entertain a right sense, and make a wise use of them, and that the ungrateful or the perverse have no right to expect a continuance of blessings they are too infatuated or too depraved to apply.

What remains for us, my brethren, but to pour forth our fervent prayers, and to exert our most strenuous efforts, that we who are called among other Christians in this life, may make our calling and election sure in that which is to come.

INFIRMARY SERMON.*

1 Peter iv. 10.

As every one hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God.

Of the indissoluble connection between morality and religion, and of that entire consistency which pervades the ordinary and extraordinary dispensations of the Deity, we have numerous and decisive proofs in the very earliest ages of the Christian Church. The Holy Spirit was in a degree evidently supernatural bestowed upon the Apostles, and many of their companions. It was to them an experimental proof of the truth of the Gospel, and it not only awakened the attention, but confirmed the belief of their followers. The ends, however, for which it was bestowed, went beyond the advantage of the individual who possessed it, and for the use of it he was responsible upon the very same principles, which ought to have regulated every other part of his moral agency. Like wealth, or talent, or power, the gift of the Holy Spirit is

* Written for Dr. Vaughan, late Warden of Merton, and preached by him at Leicester, 1817.

again and again represented as a trust assigned to man for the benefit of his fellow creatures. Though in reality a distinction, it was not to be considered as any ground for spiritual pride. It did not relax, but on the contrary it increased the obligations, which lay upon the possessor to practice every other virtue. Thus, as we read in the verse subsequent to my text, if any man speak, that is, if he had the gift of explaining and interpreting scriptural truth, he was to speak as the oracles of God. He was not to intermingle the suggestions of his own fancy with his explanations of the doctrines revealed to him, but to communicate them soberly, exactly, and reverently, so far only as his real inspiration might reach. If any man were to minister, that is, if he were a steward of those charities which in the infancy of the gospel were provided for the poor, he was to do it as of the ability which God giveth—not for the gratification of his own vanity, but for the good of mankind, that God in all things might be glorified through Jesus Christ.

The command, you see, was extended from temporal to spiritual things. In proportion as men had received the gift, and even in consequence of having received it, they were bound to minister the same one to another, and so approve themselves as good stewards by their diligence, their fidelity, and their cheerfulness, in employing the manifold grace of God, for the improvement of God's creatures.

Now it becomes alike the grateful believer and the dispassionate sceptic to observe, that, when ad-

verting to these subjects, which more immediately related to their mission, and were more likely to take a strong hold on their affections, the teachers of the gospel never lose sight of moral excellencies, even at the time in which they inculcate graces, peculiarly Christian, and insist upon the peculiar, or even preternatural means which God had employed for disseminating Christian knowledge. Hence in the chapter of my text, St. Peter instructs his followers to cherish a spirit of intense, that is of unwearied, unabated, unceasing charity one towards another. He bids them use hospitality one towards another, without grudging or partiality—faults, to which it should seem some of the Jewish converts were too prone, when they carried into their new profession those narrow prejudices and exclusive regards which, as we learn from the testimony both of sacred and profane history, their countrymen were wont to indulge towards persons who held not the same opinions, nor worshipped according to the same forms with themselves. With this apostolic precept, which points out to us the real character of Christian love, comprehending within its views every convert from every sect, every Jew, and every Heathen who might remain unconverted, every man of every kindred and nation, St. Peter joins and enforces the necessity of making a right use of spiritual gifts. The union of these duties in the mind of the Apostle is an additional proof to us of the importance, which Christianity assigns to every act of kindness, and therefore ought to be an additional incitement to

us to be good stewards, in ministering the manifold means which God may have granted us, for promoting the present as well as the future welfare of all mankind.

In proportion to the degree in which we have received the gift of God, and to the intrinsic importance of the gift itself, must be our exertions to minister the same one to another. For the very acceptance indeed of faith aided by grace, as the subject of reward from the moral governor of the world, every believer in every age must depend upon their united efficacy in facilitating and enlarging the exercise of all his other moral faculties. Am I then asked in what that exercise consists? I am told by one Apostle that it consists in adding hope unto faith, and charity to faith and hope, as the greatest of the three. I read in another inspired writer, that the faithful follower of Christ must add to his faith, virtue, or as the original word has been well explained by Bishop Warburton, fortitude—that to fortitude he must add knowledge, a term, which, in holy writ, peculiarly and frequently means knowledge of the Christian dispensation, in its evidences, doctrines, precepts, and sanctions—that to knowledge he must add temperance, to temperance patience, to patience godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity; and from the letter and spirit of the Gospel I find that by such a conscientious discharge of all practical duties from religious motives, a Christian will come unto the perfect man according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ himself.

Having thus opened to you the sound, large, and most salutary principle upon which Christian benevolence, as interwoven with the whole system of Christian duty, has been recommended by the inspired disciples of Christ, I may without violence to language transfer the words of my text to the performance of those charitable deeds, which are more directly intended to supply the wants, and to mitigate the sufferings, of our Christian brethren in their worldly concerns.

By the natural propensities of our minds we are led to remove the weight under which our fellow creatures may labour from poverty, or from sickness; and the satisfaction we feel from the success of our endeavours, will justify us in maintaining that the scriptures are not to be charged with exaggeration when they tell us, that under some circumstances it may be "more blessed to give than to receive." Whatsoever gratification may accompany the contracted and grovelling notions of the covetous, or the licentious indulgences of the prodigal, they are quite unworthy of comparison with the permanent and solid delight, which arises from compassionating the miseries and supplying the exigencies of other men. In addition to that unmixed purity, that undisturbed serenity, which furnishes the mind of the merciful man with a continued feast, he meets with a recompence, the more pleasing to him because it was not the primary and immediate object of his wishes, in the good opinion and good will of other social beings. Rational and moral creatures like ourselves act up to the dignity of their nature, by

the rooted love and habitual practice of every virtue whatsoever. But it well deserves to be remarked, that the disposition of soul which induces us voluntarily, directly, and frequently to promote the happiness of mankind, has, by the general use of words, following the general course of experience, and the general feelings of the heart, pre-eminently and almost exclusively obtained the appellation of *humanity*. By the same temper of mind, and the same train of action which is conformable to that temper, we fulfil the duties which are incumbent upon us, as the creatures of God and the disciples of Christ, and as the partakers of a common nature with our fellow creatures, and our fellow Christians. We employ the talents committed to us, as good stewards, when we minister them one to another, according to the measure of the ability which we derive from God above. We qualify ourselves for receiving the gracious approbation of our Redeemer at the last day, when every morsel of bread, and every cup of water which we give to our brethren for Christ's sake, will be remembered and rewarded, as if given to Christ himself. We gain the affectionate regard, and the ready confidence of beings who are endowed with the same rational faculties, the same social affections, the same exquisite and instinctive sense of right and wrong with ourselves. We imitate, with reverence be it spoken, that God, who has been luminously and emphatically described to us as *love*. We imitate him in the extent and variety of his works, when remembering that he has made of one blood all the na-

tions of the earth, and that he causes the glorious sun to shine, and the refreshing rain to descend upon the unjust as well as the just, we strive in the exercise of this one great virtue, charity, to be perfect, even as he is perfect, and to diffuse the blessings of beneficence, so far as may be in our power, through the whole human race.

By thus considering and thus applying the manifold favour of God, we discharge a double obligation—the obligation of gratitude for those advantages which God has permitted us to possess for our own benefit, and the obligation of debt for such a portion of those advantages as have been entrusted to us for the use of other men. Who indeed called us into being? Who has put the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the produce of the earth in subjection to us? Who, after creating, hath preserved us? Who, by the physical and moral order of things, hath provided for our safety, or improvement, through the whole constitution of our nature, mental and corporeal? Who, I say, hath endowed our minds with memory, with discernment, and all those higher classes of intellect, which are distinguished by the name of genius? Who hath given health, strength, and activity to our bodies? Who hath filled the air, the earth, the rivers, and the seas with materials upon which that strength and that activity of our bodies, guided by those powers of our minds, may be employed with boundless diversity, for the comforts, the conveniences, and the ornaments of life? Who, in almost every climate, hath spread over the surface of the soil remedies well suited to the

exigencies of local maladies, easy of access, antecedent in use even to the elementary rules of science, and operating by those simple processes, which afford speedy and efficacious aid to the restorative powers of nature, when those powers have not been enfeebled by the artificial delicacies of luxury, and the frequent excesses of debauchery? Who hath taught the savage, with the quickness resembling instinct, to cull and apply the leaves and the juices and the roots of plants, which even the dreary forest and the uncultivated plains hath set before him, for the alleviation of pain? Who hath instructed man, in a more civilized form of society, to explore the deep bowels of the earth, to analyze the discriminating properties of various minerals, and to compound them in endless variety, and with exquisite art, for averting or mitigating the mischievous effects of disease? Hath not the same wise and gracious being vouchsafed to us manifold instances of his favour, not arbitrarily intended for personal distinction, but accompanied by the higher and more sacred consideration of a trust, in exalted station and abundant wealth? Hath he not enabled, as well as commanded us to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that rejoice? Let us therefore, not forget that all are favours conferred by one and the same God—that all are trusts reposed in us by him—that all are intended by him for the joint benefit of the possessor, and of his fellow creatures—that, according to the degree in which we have been entrusted, we must render an account of our stewardship—and that having received freely, on

the part of God, we are required on our part to *give* freely.

From these general observations upon the duty of charity, and the usefulness of the means which give us the power of being charitable, both to ourselves and other men, I would proceed to direct your attention to those laudable and beneficial purposes, which are more closely and more visibly connected with the occasion, upon which we are now assembled in the sanctuary. Here, doubtless, we shall find the grace or favour of God to be manifold, and we shall also find, that under different aspects and in different degrees, we are all of us partakers of that favour, and that by such participation we are severally invested with a stewardship, for the diligent or negligent, the faithful or unfaithful application of which we shall be accountable at the last day. Are we placed in a situation which lifts us above the generality of our brethren? Then surely, as good stewards, we must encourage other men to charity by the authority of example, and so let our good works shine before men, as to convince them that fortuitous and external distinctions have not placed an impassable barrier between them and ourselves—that pride has not imperceptibly and secretly extinguished our social affections—that it has not made us callous to the sufferings, from which by the providence of God, and not by our own merits, we are exempted—above all, that it has not blinded us entirely to the sight of numberless woes which, from causes inscrutable and irresistible, may one day or other overtake the sovereign on his throne as well

as the peasant in his cottage. He that wields the mighty sceptre—he that inhabits the stately palace—he that is clothed with purple and fine linen, and fareth sumptuously every day, can plead no exemption from the pestilence that walketh in noon day—from the sudden changes of weather—from the pernicious influence of climate—from the latent and complicated malignity of hereditary disease — from the gradual decay of age—from the effects of violent passions and unruly appetites upon our bodily constitution—and from innumerable evils, which by the established laws of nature rush forth from their secret ambuscade, and spread havoc indiscriminately among the highest and lowest classes of mankind. While indeed we grant that men in particular situations are furnished with a larger share of means to prevent or alleviate some of the calamities of which I have been speaking, we cannot forget that by the same means they are at the same time furnished with the power of averting or alleviating the same calamities in the condition of their fellow creatures. We must not dissemble, that the advantages by which they are themselves distinguished, constitute a *direct and peculiar* obligation for them to manifest their thankfulness to God by their tender and active compassion to man. Has it been the will of Heaven to grant us a more ample portion of intellectual ability, and more numerous opportunities for cultivating it by the discipline of education? Surely the knowledge we acquire is a trust reposed in us for lightening the miseries of other men, who by their daily toil, or their inferior talents, are excluded

from those natural advantages which are conferred upon ourselves.

But farther, whether it has been the will of the Deity to give us a greater portion of wealth, or power, or knowledge, than he has granted to other men, each of these advantages carries with it the properties of a trust—each is designed for something more than the benefit of individuals—each will conduce to the aggregate happiness of the human race—and for the proper use of each a recompence is reserved at that awful season, in the issue of which the possessor of each is deeply interested, and upon the arrival of which every man shall reap according as he hath sown.

Permit me to suggest to you that the labour of love, in which as supporters of an Hospital we are engaged, is productive of advantages which do not present themselves to the minds of superficial observers, and that in the stewardship thus committed to us there is a diversity of gifts, by the judicious and upright use of which we confer many remote as well as many near benefits upon a Christian community.

In a country so distinguished as our own by the wide diffusion of property, and the multiplied means of accumulation, the united endeavours of individuals have provided that protection for the indigent, and those comforts for the afflicted, which in other nations have been supplied, sometimes by the munificence of Sovereigns, and sometimes by the bounty of persons who were at once wealthy, humane, and pious. The free and noble spirit of

our constitution has extended its auspicious influence far beyond the circle of disputed and undisputed questions upon the government of states. It has introduced a kind of moral and religious equality far more intelligible and far more salutary, than that political equality which has sometimes been extolled with designs alike unfavourable to the real well being of society, and unjustifiable upon any solid grounds of philosophy. It has brought the distresses of the poor more nearly within the view of their superiors, and invigorated the sympathy of the higher with the lower classes of the community. By the wise and happy order of things in the moral world, these measures, which have been taken more immediately for the benefit of the poor, have ultimately recompensed the liberality of the rich, by facilitating and increasing various advantages, in which both of them have an equal interest. All are subject to the pains of disease, all are exposed to casualties, all may be indebted for life or health to the aid of professional men; and the skilfulness of such men is increased by institutions such as that which I am this day recommending to your protection. Within the walls of an hospital almost every kind and every degree of those maladies which flesh is heir to are brought into notice. The assistance given to the sick and the maimed is free from many of the inconveniences to which caprice, or rashness, or ignorance, may give rise in the private practice of medical men.

As it has been observed, that for the pure

administration of our laws we are much indebted to the watch which is kept over the conduct of judges, by the presence of men who belong to the same profession and pursue the same studies, so it deserves to be remarked, that within these hospitals every physician and every surgeon acts under the inspection of men who are qualified to form a correct judgment upon the regularity of their attention and the propriety of their advice. That judgment too is generally impartial as well as correct, for it is happily exempt from those jealousies which may sometimes operate upon other occasions, when the personal profit of individuals is connected with the management of diseases. Every person employed in these institutions is an observer as well as an agent. Every man is a teacher as well as a learner, and the separate experience of each contributes to the aggregate stock of knowledge in all. The information which is acquired—the discoveries which are made—the success, and even the failure of well intended experiments, are additional qualifications for professional men, in the exercise of those duties which they may be called upon to discharge in the general course of their practice. He, therefore, who contributes to the support of these institutions with a most direct view to the benefit of his fellow creatures, may eventually reap the fruits of his liberality, when, by the providence of God, he himself becomes assailed by such maladies as in hospitals have been treated with that accuracy, which the opportunities furnished by hospitals could alone have enabled a practitioner

to attain. Let it be further remembered, that by a generous emulation in extending the boundaries of useful science, it has been the custom in many large towns to communicate the peculiar modifications of disease, and the results of various means which have been adopted to investigate its causes, to discriminate its symptoms, to shorten its duration and to assuage its malignity.

By the light which in places of this kind has been sometimes unexpectedly thrown upon the primary sources or the complicated properties of disease, they who dwell in the humble cottage, and they who inhabit the stately mansion, may find relief, hitherto denied to their forefathers through many successive ages. The faithful friend of your bosom—the beloved partaker of your duties, your joys, and your sorrows in conjugal life—the son, perhaps the only son, over whom you watch with anxious care, as destined to inherit the ample stores of wealth that have descended to you from remote generations, and to support the ancient name and the ancient honours of an illustrious family—yes, my brethren, each of these persons thus endeared to you may be rescued from destruction by the measures that were first employed for some lowly peasant from the sequestered hamlet—some helpless and pennyless Lazarus lying at the gate of the rich man full of sores — some forlorn traveller who on the trackless heath or in a dark recess had fallen among thieves, and who there must have perished if the chambers of an hospital had not been open for his reception, and reserved for him that succour, which had been often sought in vain

by heroes bleeding in the field of victory, or by monarchs languishing on the bed of sickness in gorgeous palaces.

But farther, in regard to patients, they, it is well known, are preserved from many embarrassments and many dangers to which, in other situations, they are alike liable from the temerity and the timidity—from the limited practice and the theoretical refinements of medical attendants—from the negligence and unfeelingness of servants—from the injudicious tenderness of near relations—and from the froward reluctance of sick persons to submit to those restraints, in which they are here disposed to acquiesce by the authority of skilful physicians and surgeons, by the example of fellow sufferers, and by their own immediate observations of the good effects, which flow from established regulations for caution in diet and for the use of medicine. Here also they are preserved from many evils by which disorders are generated or aggravated — from the corrosions of helpless and cheerless solitude — from frivolous or corrupt society—from temptations to coarse and destructive debauchery—from the noxious effects of an impure atmosphere—from the obstructions which disregard to personal cleanliness throws in the way of recovery among the poor—and from fruitless, or I should rather say, from perilous reliance upon the deceitfulness and presumption of empiricism.

Such too are the circumstances attendant upon these institutions, that while the miseries of men are alleviated, their delicacy is not wounded. They see not the hand which is stretched out for their

relief; they force no invidious and humiliating comparisons between themselves and their benefactors. They are less likely to sink in their own estimation, or to suspect that they are the object of contempt, even to their superiors, when they perceive that numbers are at the same instant partaking of the same succour, which is afforded to themselves. They hear no insulting reproaches; they see no proud look, they meet day after day with those exertions for their welfare—with those soothing inquiries—with those deliberate, tender, and anxious attentions, which are not to be found in sudden and transient acts of charity. They know that their cases are entrusted to the care of professional men, whose wisdom is indisputable, and whose kindness is disinterested. They know that generous and good men have by pecuniary contributions provided for their succour in the melancholy hour of pain and sickness. They feel, too, that no abject submission, no base compliances are required from them when their health is restored, and when they return to the bosom of their beloved families. By these and similar considerations, charity is yet more endeared to those who are the objects of it; and the consciousness of supplying such endearments, must enhance the value of benevolence *thus* exercised in the estimation of the benevolent themselves.

Well am I aware that allusions to local circumstances are not always adapted to the solemnity of the sanctuary. Cases, however, may arise which the good sense, and the good feelings of my audi-

ence would perhaps induce them to consider as reasonable exceptions to the common rule. Something surely you will allow to the attachment which your preacher has formed to the place of his nativity—to the sweet remembrance of innocence in childhood, of playfulness in boyhood—and to a thankful sense of the resources which, through paternal kindness, were supplied to him for the culture of his understanding, and the regulation of his moral habits in a very flourishing school, and at a learned university. And surely that attachment will be higher in your esteem when it affords aid to the general principle of benevolence, especially where the goodly fruits of it are more immediately diffused over scenes justly endeared to us by our earliest and fondest recollections. Perhaps I may with still greater confidence appeal to another principle, more active and more hallowed, which you have all experienced, and the value of which you will instantaneously feel when I pronounce the name of it, *filial piety*. In this town my venerable parent lived for many years, and was honoured with the approbation of the most distinguished families in the neighbourhood. In this town he with great success and great celebrity alleviated the sharpest sufferings to which human nature is exposed. Near to this town are deposited the remains of what in him was mortal. Upon his intellectual endowments, and his professional skill, it might be improper even for a son to expatiate; and indeed there are now before me persons in every class by whom I shall be anticipated in every statement, however correct, and in

every commendation however ardent. But upon the present occasion I may, without presumption, expect your assent and your sympathy, when I remind you, that the institution in favour of which we are this day assembled, owes much to his sagacity and his activity for its origin and its prosperity—that the results of his experience and his benevolence are manifest in the regulations which he proposed—that this salutary influence has extended from year to year—and that in consequence of his counsels, and his exertions, your own wisdom, your own compassion, and your own generosity have been directed more judiciously, and employed more effectually. Let me then express my humble and pious hope, that the aged and the infirm, the orphan and the widow, the afflicted in mind and the diseased in body, who have found relief from this institution, will raise their grateful voices, and plead in the behalf of their benefactor and my parent, when in common with them, with myself, and with all who now hear me, he shall stand before the tribunal of his heavenly Judge.

Every enlightened and candid hearer will be disposed to pardon me for confessing, that in the enlarged science, and improved practice of medicine, I must feel an additional interest from my near relation to a person, who, for the good of others, hath ministered the gift which he is conscious of having received from God, and who, I should hope, is not more adorned by his connections with the rich and powerful, than by his affability and humanity to the humble and the poor.

My Christian brethren, with every advantage of accumulating experience, and well regulated system, you make yourselves the instruments of God's ordinary providence by the performance of those very actions, which accompanied the extraordinary and miraculous exertions of power in our blessed Redeemer. He, at a word, cleansed the leper, he gave sight to the blind, he caused the deaf to hear, and the lame to walk; and, let me ask, are not these the very offices to which our own efforts are directed? Do we not apply all the human means in our power for lightening those kinds and those degrees of misery, which attracted so large a share of notice from the Son of God, and the relief of which cast an amiable, as well as a venerable air over the whole extent of his character? Shall we not appear ourselves his faithful disciples, if, according to the ability given to us, we so far manifest our love one towards another, as he manifested his love to the suffering part of our fellow-creatures. We are astonished at the emanations of his power, when the winds and waves obeyed his voice; but our astonishment is mingled with affection and gratitude when we read that he went about doing good—that he cured many of their infirmities—that when they brought to him persons taken with divers kinds of sickness he restored them to health—that he declared the restoration to be the recompence of faith in many an humble suppliant—and that in addition to other miraculous qualifications bestowed upon his Apostles, he gave them power to expel evil spirits, or as the Scripture language has been under-

stood by the more learned expositors, to remove melancholy, frenzy, and other frightful disorders of the mind, and to cure bodily diseases. Here, indeed, he sets before us a train of lovely actions, by the performance of which we shall really and visibly follow his steps. Difficult it may be for us to keep ourselves quite unspotted, as Christians, from the world. It may be yet more difficult to imitate his patience and humility when he was buffeted, when he was scourged, and when he submitted to a painful and ignominious death upon the cross. But *no* such plea of difficulty can be urged for our insensibility or negligence in the delightful office of Christian benevolence. It is not difficult, but easy, for every man to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction. It is easy for the poorest among us to utter that good word which maketh glad the heart of man, when racked with disease and pining sorrow. It is easy for the widow to offer that mite which most assuredly will be registered in the book of God. It is yet more easy for the rich and the powerful to reserve some portion of their treasures for the benefit of many unhappy beings, who from institutions like our own can meet with effectual succour. The money which we so employ might have been squandered in trifling amusements, or in riotous licentiousness, or in ostentatious superfluities, and though largely granted to the relief of our afflicted brethren, it will leave us more than a sufficient supply for all the sweet enjoyments which smooth our passage through this vale of tears.

To conclude—the institution in behalf of which I

am now pleading to willing ears, and to feeling hearts, has one most striking recommendation to our most serious notice. That which, compared with the possessions of the wealthy, amounts only to such a pittance as scarcely falls within calculation —that which is subducted from gratifications, the want of which would scarcely be felt for a single hour—that which in a well regulated mind would scarcely produce for one moment the impression of self-denial, or self-command, may, if bestowed for the support of an hospital, eventually be productive of signal and lasting advantage to our fellow-creatures. It may dry up the tears of a widow afflicted and alarmed at the expected dissolution of an orphan son upon whom she depended for support—it may preserve the grey hairs of a father from going down in sorrow to the grave—it may give back to society a laborious husbandman, a skilful artificer, or a brave defender of our altars and our hearths. If such be the properties of the institutions, to which our contributions and our counsels are applied—if we thus minister one to another according to the gifts we have severally received—if the manifold favours of God be used in dispensing such manifold blessings to mankind—then, as wise and faithful stewards, shall we be approved at the last day, and then for the right use of the talent entrusted to us we shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

SERMON XXVI A.*

FRIENDLY-SOCIETY SERMON.

ROMANS xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

IT is pleasant and desirable to be esteemed by those with whom you have dealings, and to whom you are known; and the secret or open dislike of mankind always accompanies those persons who are addicted to quarrelling. Some men profess their anxiety to be at peace—and it is mere profession—for they mean that other men should comply with their humours, submit to their insolence, and promote their views of aggrandizement, or lucre, by the surrender of their own legal rights, or social comforts. But as this cast of mind does not deserve the good-will of other men, the expectation of gaining it upon such harsh conditions, is quite ridiculous. It is evident that we were created to live together in a friendly manner. The frame of our body—the faculties of our understanding—our wants, and the method of supplying them—the good offices we can receive and return—the principles which gave rise

* Preached apparently on the Restoration, May 29.

to this and similar societies, are all proofs of the benevolence which the gospel inculcates. Providence then intended us to live in a state of mutual charity. But pride and passion harden the heart, delude the judgment, and render men enemies at once to each other, and to Almighty God.

Now the doctrine and example of the blessed Jesus show that he had nothing more constantly in his view than to promote brotherly love; and if in Christian countries men, calling themselves his followers, do not promote peace, the fault lies in their own misguided and depraved disposition, and not in their religion. By this, says our Lord, shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. But the world abounds with perverse tempers, which are ever busy in vexing and disturbing others. Our very friends will sometimes be envious, captious, and fickle. Our enemies thwart us in our honest and useful pursuits, interrupt our tranquillity, depreciate our good qualities, and proclaim and exaggerate our imperfections and our faults. Children are undutiful, parents are tyrannical, servants are perverse and disobedient, and masters are capricious and severe. We are called upon to perform what is not in our power, and because we do not sacrifice our time, our fortune, our health, our talents, and it may be, our liberty, honour, and conscience to the froward wills and arrogant commands of others, they hate and vilify us.

Now with these evils in view, St. Paul intreats us to live peaceably—to do so, if it be possible—to do so, as much as lieth in us. We must endeavour

to have no enemies; and if our endeavours fail the blame will not be on our side. In the time of the Apostles, their converts were despised and persecuted. Falsehoods were invented to blacken their characters. They were represented as persons of a morose and unsociable temper, as destitute of learning and abilities, as shunning the company of the wise and good, and associating together in order to conceal their own crimes in conduct, or their own absurdities in opinion. St. Paul therefore exhorts them to live peaceably even with heathens—to procure the good opinion of their calumniators by acts of prudence, affability, meekness, and charity — not to deny or dissemble their real faith—not to neglect any Christian duty — not to join in any idolatrous practices — but to entertain sentiments of sincere good-will to Jews and Gentiles, and to win them over to the belief of the true religion, by the steady and exemplary performance of all good works.

You, my hearers, are not exposed to many of those dreadful trials—you are protected by the laws, not persecuted by them—you have numberless and inestimable blessings, under an excellent constitution both in Church and State—and you ought to be very thankful to God Almighty that the poor as well as the rich have an abundant share in those advantages, which are not granted to many other countries in Christendom. Yet we are appointed to dwell among unreasonable and contentious men; and it is sometimes impossible for you to please them, and to obey God. You must not, therefore, fear the scorn, the censure, the power, and malice

of your enemies, when they demand from you compliances which God has forbidden. But pray remember, that it is within the reach of every one among you to do much for your own quiet. You must not remain under the odious government of your own turbulent passions. You must resist all violent temptations to hate, to slander, to over-reach and injure other men. You must exercise that valuable virtue which is called prudence. You must not bring discredit upon a good cause, by a bad way of managing it. If you love your neighbour as yourself—if you reverence truth and virtue—if you wish well to your country, obey its laws, and behave respectfully to your sovereign, and those who are in authority under him for your advantage—if you, in the sincerity of your souls, are grateful for the pure and holy religion in which you profess to believe, as a rule of conduct, and a ground of your hopes in a world to come—then you will have made great progress in that amiable turn of mind which the text recommends. You will not be fierce in reforming smaller errors and abuses—you will not reprimand offenders with ill-temper and incivility—you will not abuse your neighbours for their involuntary or venial mistakes in politics and religion—you will be more attentive to the correction of your own prejudices, and errors, than those of other men—more particularly you will be on your guard against defamation, and, remembering the bitter grief you suffer when your own reputation is attacked, you will be very tender to the good name of your neighbours—you will set a watch

over the door of your lips—you will abstain from wanton and profane swearing—you will abhor a lie—and will be silent when you are likely to provoke a fellow-creature even by an ill-natured truth.

Thus studying to be quiet, and mind your own business, you will escape the heinous guilt and inward anguish of those tale-bearers, whose time hangs heavily upon their hands, and whose tongues are sharper than a two-edged sword. As much as possible, you will avoid the familiarity of malicious and quarrelsome persons; for you know how dangerous it is to engage in their animosities, and that if you render railing for railing, it is quite impossible for you to preserve your own innocence, or the peace of your own souls, and your own families. No, my hearers, let it be your glory to bless those who persecute you—not to avenge yourselves, but to overcome evil with good. Let it be your praise to forgive injuries as much and as often as you can, consistently with self preservation; and to put a candid interpretation, where it is possible, upon the actions, words, and thoughts of all around you.

He who loves his neighbour will generally secure the favour and esteem of mankind; and he will obtain many solid advantages even in this world, which riches, which power, which learning and genius can never command, if they are accompanied by arrogance, or impertinence, or uncharitableness. These instructions are useful to Christians in all situations; and they are most especially proper for those who walk in the humbler paths of life. Surely in hard labour, in coarse apparel, in food which may

sometimes be scanty, in the lot which exposes you to the scorching sun, or the wintry blast—surely in these things there is sufficient evil to exercise your patience, without bringing upon yourselves unnecessarily and perversely the numerous and galling irritations, which a quarrelsome man always suffers from the disturbed state of his own mind, and the merited distrust, or contempt, or resistance, of his neighbours.

But the duty of being peaceable is more particularly incumbent upon persons who, like yourselves, have united for the mutual help and comfort of each other, in seasons of sorrow and sickness. I have very often pointed out to you the usefulness of your institution; and your own experience has justified my commendations. Your industry, as it enables you to provide for your families, is itself laudable. I have again and again observed to you, that agriculture is one of the most useful employments in which civilized man can be engaged. When you till the ground, you cannot fail to remember, that God gave it the power to bring forth fruit, and that this fruit is intended for the good of man. The flowers of the field, which grow up before you, have surpassed the glory in which Solomon was arrayed. The mighty energies of nature in the process of vegetation lie open to your view; and in all of them you may discern the power, the wisdom, and the benevolence of the deity. The air you breathe is far more wholesome than that of crowded cities. You are preserved from many infectious diseases which there spread desolation among the weak and the strong, the

young and the old. And, what is far more important, you are at a distance from many temptations to riotous debauchery—temptations to which youth is too prone to yield—temptations which bring on weakness, pain, and sickness, and premature old age, and which hurry the incautious or the profligate very soon into the grave. Will you then counteract these advantages by a quarrelsome disposition? No, on the contrary, by cultivating a peaceable and a benevolent disposition, you will show yourselves worthy of all the conveniences, temporal and spiritual, which are attendant upon that condition, in which you are placed by a gracious providence. From the honest earnings of that industry, you put by a part for the praiseworthy and important purposes of your society; and when you lay your hands upon your hearts, do you not feel, that every good-natured and peaceful member of your institution, is a blessing to yourselves, and an ornament to your rules? It must sometimes happen that a difference of opinion will arise upon the various concerns, which come before you. Nevertheless it lieth with you, to speak your own sentiments calmly and civilly—to employ arguments, not railing, in defence of them—and to be governed by those decisions which other men, quite as well informed, and quite as well disposed, may finally agree upon for the expenditure of your finances, and the relief of those who stand in need of it.

The spot where most of you reside will present a very intelligible, and very commendable pattern for your imitation. The broils and bickerings, the envy-

ings and murmurings, which once annoyed this parish, have ceased. Among other and great improvements in morals and civilization, I cannot fail to observe, that a spirit of union and good-neighbourhood has for some years subsisted among us; and upon the substantial virtues which flow from this source, I set a much higher value than upon the showy and specious pretences of zealots to evangelical purity in doctrine and discipline. Most of you, in your several stations, must have experienced the beneficial effects of the circumstances which I have just now mentioned, and I trust that you will find in them very clear directions, and very strong incitements to adopt the same conduct in the regulation of your own peculiar concerns, as a friendly society.

Do not suppose that I mean to chide you—on the contrary, my intention is to exhort you, to encourage you, to prepare you for being temperate and vigilant in situations, when some unexpected and undeserved provocation may come upon you. I have reason to believe that your affairs are judiciously and honestly administered; and great is the satisfaction I feel in the opportunity I now have for remarking, that for several years I have not heard of any violent and mischievous disputes. I therefore commend you for this good behaviour; and I earnestly advise you to persevere in it, for the credit of your society, and the benefit of all who belong to it. Suppose that it were the will of providence to visit you with any severe calamity—to take from you partially or totally the use of your limbs—to afflict

you with a sharp or lingering disease. In this case, you would doubtless be entitled to succour from your funds—your hunger and thirst would be satisfied—your equitable claims would be admitted—your bodily pains would be mitigated. But tell me now, would you not feel exquisite satisfaction, if you at the same time could say within yourselves, that you were not only assisted, but esteemed and beloved by all the members of your institution—that you had lived among them decorously and quietly to the utmost extent of your power—that you had endeavoured to heal all differences, wheresoever they arose—that the succour you met with was granted to you, not grudgingly, but cheerfully—that your brethren had great and real pleasure in lightening the load of your affliction—that they recollected your conciliatory words—your honest intentions—your unfeigned love of peace—your earnest endeavour to preserve it? Most assuredly, reflections of this sort would give an additional relish to all the advantages you could derive from medicine, from food, and every other comfort and convenience, which your society can supply.

I pray God to preserve you from pains of body and mind; and whenever they overtake you, I most seriously hope that you may have the testimony of a good conscience, for having cherished a spirit of true Christian charity in your families, in your neighbourhood, and towards every person to whom you are bounden by those ties of brotherly kindness which are indispensibly necessary for the

credit, the prosperity, and the manifold uses of your institution.

If such a righteous and Christian spirit had prevailed among our forefathers, the complicated, terrible, and dreadful calamities, our deliverance from which is commemorated on this day, would not have distressed and disgraced the country in which you were born. If such a spirit had been diffused among the governments of Europe, the continent would not have been harassed by the calamities and perils of long-continued, and wide-wasting wars. It is our duty to contemplate these awful scenes with seriousness, and to draw from them such lessons of forbearance and moderation as may contribute to our peace, both in private and public life. Let us reverence the religion, which is happily established among us. Let us love the person, and esteem the talents and virtues of those, whom the laws of the land protect in different forms of worship, and different modifications of Christian faith. Let us patiently bear even the proud and pharisaical reproaches of those who not only give themselves credit for superior righteousness, but represent us as miserable outcasts from the saving truths of the Gospel. We are conscious of not deserving such contemptuous and harsh treatment; and we must take care not to imbibe that uncharitable temper which induces us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, and to impute, without any just reason for doing so, a hollow faith, a scanty portion of grace, a marked and invincible inferiority in all

spiritual excellencies to our fellow-subjects, and fellow Christians.

The good disposition so earnestly recommended by St. Paul, will spread its auspicious effects through every class of society—it will restrain the great from tyranny, and the poor from turbulence —it will secure you the uninterrupted and plenary enjoyment of the blessings that flow from a constitution favourable at once to good order, and genuine freedom—it will produce harmony and sweet affection between parents and children, masters and servants—it will lesson all difficulties in the business of your society, and add largely to the usefulnesss and the agreeableness of those provisions, which are made for the relief of the aged, the sick, and the needy—it will give you refreshing slumbers, when you lie down on your beds, and when you rise to your daily toil, it will enable you to eat your daily bread with a contented and serene mind—it will procure you the praise of all intelligent and virtuous observers, and the approbation of your own hearts—and whensoever it pleases God to call you away from this transitory world, it will expiate many of your failings at the judgment seat of Christ, and obtain for you admission into the mansions of the blessed, where all tears shall be wiped away from all faces, and where peace and love will reign for evermore.

SERMON XXVII A.

ASSIZE SERMON.

ROMANS xiii. 3.

Rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil.

WHETHER we appeal to the investigations of philosophy, or the dictates of common sense, it would be difficult to find a definition of legal power more sound, more comprehensive, more satisfactory to our understandings, or more useful in our conduct than that which is furnished to us in the words of the text. It connects the dignity of magistrates with their duties; it recommends their persons to our reverence—their office to our esteem—and their injunctions to our obedience.

In the language, not of rhetorical declamation or delusive mysticism, but of clearness and precision, it shows the interest which every member of a civilized community must have in supporting the rights and giving effect to the commands of those rulers, by whom he is protected from the stratagems of fraud and the outrages of violence.

In the verses immediately preceding the text the Apostle traces up authority to its origin in the will of God, as announced to us in his works—I mean, in such a constitution of external causes and effects as

make government necessary, and in such affections and faculties of the human mind as make it obligatory, when that necessity is perceived and experienced. But if all powers, by whatever title they may be distinguished, and under whatever aspect they may be exhibited, proceed from God, no rational and moral creature of God can oppose human power without opposing the divine authority from which it proceeds.

This reasoning, be it observed, does not tend to the justification of tyranny, which, being destructive to the happiness of man, must therefore be adverse to the will of God. It does not depend upon those exterior modifications of authority, which, in different ages and different countries, may, with the consent of all, have been adopted for the benefit of all. Every Government exercises authority through the medium of human regulations, supported by human sanctions—every Government, framing those institutions wisely, intending them honestly, and executing them firmly, fulfils the purposes of Heaven, and therefore is entitled to plead the authority of Heaven in the maintenance of its own strength, and the justification of its own measures. It is a power from the Deity—it is ordained by the Deity—and therefore resistance to the one is impiety towards the other.

The Apostle, having established this plain and instructive position, proceeds to throw further light upon it by stating the beneficial ends for which power is appointed. It is a terror not to good works but to evil—it implies in the possessor, not

caprice but wisdom—not arbitrary will but substantial justice—not a disposition to deform the fair works of God by wanton irregularity or brutal cruelty, but a principle which aims at preserving and perpetuating that order, which is essential to the improvement of the moral world, and which, amidst the regulations and restraints of society, exalts the human character to the highest pitch of perfection.

Here then we see the resemblance between the providence of God and the magistracy of man. Each of them is guided by justice—each of them aims at usefulness—each of them encourages virtue—each of them discourages vice—each deserves our gratitude, and each challenges our obedience.

In conformity to the great and solemn purpose for which we are now assembled, I shall make such further remarks upon the language of St. Paul as may inspire us with the fear of God and the love of each other, vindicate and even endear to us the execution of temporal justice, and further us in the performance of all good works. Now St. Paul supposes rulers actually to be, what in truth they ought to be, the protectors of the good, and the discouragers of the evil. He argues our obligation to obey them explicitly and forcibly, on the ground of our own personal happiness, as resulting from that obedience. Upon particular forms of government he founds no subtle distinctions, but he enforces those precepts which are salutary under every form, where rulers are what he assumes them to be. Our sense of self-preservation indeed concurs with our sense of duty in inspiring us with respect for every ma-

gistrate, who with steady impartiality shelters the innocent and punishes the guilty.

With equal discretion and decorum St. Paul declines all invidious discussion upon rulers of an opposite character. The purport of his whole discourse was to prevent disturbance, to promote peace, to instruct at once the governor and the governed—the governor, by pointing out to him the ends of his office—and the governed, by convincing them of the numerous and substantial advantages which they derived, wheresoever those ends were diligently pursued and successfully attained. By these means he avoids all the speculative difficulties in which his reasoning would have been involved, if he had adverted to any of the intricate cases, which are more properly the subject of legal than of evangelical inquiry, because dependent on the infinitely varied forms of human authority. He lays down a principle which extends to every legitimate government, and he infers from it such duties as are indispensably requisite to the preservation of every well regulated society.

Further we may observe that, according to the sentiments of the apostle, as expressed in the text or implied in passages that surround it, the proper rule of our own conduct must arise from other and higher causes than merely human laws and human penalties. For, shall it be said that works, proceeding only from the dread of earthly punishment, are truly and vitally good? No surely. They derive this quality from our moral and religious apprehensions of rectitude before this performance; and

when performed, they not only shelter us from the sword of the magistrate, but give us a claim to that protection which is the tacit condition of our obedience, and its permanent and ample, though indirect reward. So again, works are evil, not because the magistrate is a terror to them, but because they violate the express or implied commands of God, and because they result from the excesses of our passions and the corruptions of our hearts. The magistrate, therefore, punishes as legally evil, what our own consciences must before have pronounced to be morally criminal, and in this point of view he eventually promotes our future as well as our present well-being.

Whosoever resisteth the power, says St. Paul, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they who resist shall receive to themselves condemnation. Here the Apostle supposes the persons to whom his argument is addressed, to understand that fear of God which is calculated to affect all moral agents in all circumstances of life—to respect that will of their Creator, which is a just and universal rule of action to all his creatures—to perceive in short, and to feel the leading distinctions of our moral sense between good and evil. In this case no man can consistently object to the design and nature of the magistrate's office, because it presupposes and confirms the dictates of sincere piety and sound morality—because it facilitates the good works which our hearts have before approved—and because it throws new difficulties, and new discouragements in the way of those evil works which

our hearts have before condemned. Considered indeed in their fullest extent, and traced up to their real origin, laws themselves form a part of morality; and they who administer them are the instruments not merely of our worldly happiness, but of our improvement in every virtuous habit and every religious principle. Hence it is that the beneficial effects of magistracy must depend upon the general prevalence of conscience amongst men. Unless legal institutions accorded with our general and clear conception of right and wrong, they might be dreaded, but could not be approved—they would lose the property, and also the appearance of justice—they would be evaded even by the virtuous, and amongst the wicked they would be counteracted by the opposition of force to force.

Here then we see the intimate and important connexion between religion and laws; and here too we feel the obligation which lies upon us, as the professors of Christianity, to observe the wise and just commands of our Governors, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake; for we consider them as deriving their authority from God, for the very purpose of procuring a more ready, constant, and extensive obedience to the laws of God, as enforcing what he has already commanded—as discouraging what he has already forbidden—as preventing us from becoming vicious and abandoned here, so as to secure us from the heavier punishment of guilt hereafter. Rules are a terror to us, be it remembered, only for evil works; that is, for works

which, if they could be committed with impunity in this world, would be more likely to leave us regardless of the destiny that awaits us in the next.

Such representation of human governments is no less interesting, I would hope, than true. It tends to allay that jealousy which annoys and alarms the mind of man in the contemplation of power separated from usefulness. It shows that our obedience is not the homage of slaves, but the tribute of reasonable creatures to the guardians of their rights, and the promoters of their well-being. It inspires us with a fear of man analogous to that which religion prescribes towards God—a fear mingled with confidence and thankfulness—the fear not so much of offending that which is powerful, as of resisting that which is wise and just, and of counteracting that which plans and executes, permits or interdicts, rewards and punishes, not for our intimidation and debasement, but for our solid peace and permanent welfare.

Now, whatever may be the wisdom or the integrity of those to whom the administration of the laws may be committed, their endeavours will be attended only with precarious and imperfect effects, unless they be seconded by the approbation and concurrence of the community. Rulers, says the Apostle, are not a terror to good works. Be it so. But they are the protectors of good men; and if their persons be insulted—if their motives be misrepresented—if their decisions be invalidated by perverse cavils or undistinguishing reproaches—their power to promote the happiness of the innocent and the

meritorious will be considerably diminished. To evil works they are a terror. But as punishment is well known to operate by example, the most salutary ends of law will be defeated, if men are taught indiscriminately to look upon the execution of it as partaking more of force than of equity—as flowing not from the dispassionate judgment, but from the unfeeling austerity of its ministers—as tending to uphold arbitrary and political institutions rather than to secure the collective interests of virtue, and the general tranquillity and prosperity of a nation. But from the folly and the guilt of such misrepresentations, every intelligent and honest member of the community will be exempt, if he accustoms himself to reflect that in all well regulated governments there is much for the good to love, as well as for the evil to fear—that justice, even in its severities, is sometimes the handmaid of benevolence—that, armed with the public strength, it aims at those very objects which the emotions of private philanthropy would induce us to pursue—that it curbs our most malignant passions—that it subdues our most vicious habits—prevents us from becoming the authors of misery and oppression to our fellow-creatures—and checks us in the career of those iniquitous practices which must terminate in the destruction of the offender himself before the awful tribunal of his heavenly Judge.

Viewing then the office of our rulers as intended for the wisest and most beneficial purposes, we shall find new motives arising in our minds both to the fear of God, and the love of our neighbour. We

shall be anxious to respect and to support that authority which concurs with the best desires of our own hearts in alleviating the distresses of the weak and the oppressed—which effects by compulsion what we should ourselves try to accomplish by admonition, in restraining the wicked—and finally, which protects those good actions by which we ourselves hope to obtain the favour of Almighty God. Be it then our earnest endeavour to co-operate with them in the high and momentous office to which they are peculiarly called. Let us, by our example, discourage the evil works which they are more especially appointed to punish; and in our prayers let us supplicate for them that assistance from above which may enlighten their understandings, and strengthen their resolutions in the administration of public justice to the terror of the profligate, the security of the honest and industrious, and the advancement of all our fellow-subjects and fellow-christians in knowledge, virtue, and true religion.

SERMON XXVIII a.

VISITATION SERMON.

COLOSSIANS iv. 5.

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

AMONG the evidences by which we would establish the truth, or illustrate the importance of Christianity, few are entitled to higher consideration than the spirit, which actuated the persons to whom the propagation of it was more immediately committed. In the choice of topics, they avoided foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they would engender strife, that they produced no profit, and tended to the subverting of the hearers. (2 Timothy, chap. ii.)

In the use of language they shunned all the artificial and meretricious ornaments of eloquence merely human, and were accustomed, like their Heavenly Master, to teach with authority, because they were conscious of relating facts which they knew to be real—or of revealing doctrines which they were commissioned to propound from above—or of enforcing duties which were closely connected

with the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind.

In the regulation of their own personal conduct, they mingled discretion with zeal, and moderation with firmness. They yielded to the prejudices, and complied with the customs of those, who were without the pale of the Christian Church—of Jews and Gentiles, so far as concession was at once compatible with innocence, and was likely to conciliate the favourable opinion of their converts. Without exposing themselves to the malignity of their enemies by ostentatious defiance or perverse opposition, they encountered every danger which it was really necessary for them to incur in executing the arduous and momentous office, which had been consigned to them. Not content with observing in their own deportment the precept of their blessed Master, who had instructed them to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, they endeavoured to restrain among their followers every deviation from decorum and prudence. They were anxious to recommend their cause by its visible and salutary influence upon the judgment, the disposition, and the actions of those who espoused it. They gave no wanton offence to the captious Jew or the fastidious Gentile. They exhorted their followers to beware lest their good should be evil spoken of—to provide things becoming and honourable in the sight of all men—to imitate the example as well as to obey the commands, of Christ himself, in letting the light of his Gospel so shine before men, that seeing the good works of those who pro-

fessed it, they might be the more readily disposed to glorify their Father, who is in heaven.

In many parts of the Sacred Writings we meet with the most animated, or the most solemn exhortations to patience and fortitude—to the voluntary renunciation of worldly distinctions, pleasures and conveniences—to the calm endurance of scoffs and wrongs, of bonds and stripes, of imprisonment and even death itself. These sacrifices of good, these aggravations of evil, were, in many cases, to be expected in the first conflicts of Christianity with the errors, the vices, and the malevolent passions of the Jews and the Heathens; and therefore for such extraordinary and heroic acts of virtue, provision was made not only by the predictions and example of our Lord himself, but by the earnest and frequent preachings of his Apostles. The efficacy of their advice was, however, to be promoted in the more ordinary course of things by milder means—by the use of discretion and vigilance—by gentleness and forbearance to those who were without—by such endeavours to "redeem the time" as were suggested by sound wisdom, and were not inconsistent with religious sincerity. Of this kind certainly is the direction given to the Colossians in my text; and as some difficulty has arisen about the interpretation of the original words, I hope that I may, without impropriety, respectfully deliver my opinion upon their import before an audience peculiarly capable of judging upon subjects of sacred criticism, and peculiarly interested in ascertaining the sense of every precept, which is connected with the practice

of Christians in all ages, or with the credit of those persons by whom Christianity was first propagated.

Scholars are divided in their sentiments upon the concluding words of my text τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι. Hammond, who acknowledges that the English version *redeeming the time* is imperfect and obscure, yet observes that any other literal translation could hardly be given in our own tongue, unless we were to say *buying out or gaining the time.* He adds, what indeed other commentators had remarked, that the expression was borrowed from the Greek translation of Daniel in chapter ii. and verse 8th, when the Magicians and Chaldeans, who had been called upon to interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and had been threatened with death if they were unable to interpret it, endeavoured, as says our translation, to gain the time, by which it is meant, says he, that they looked for delay, and so consulted for their own safety. Le Clerc agrees with Hammond on the circumstance of delay, but I think that although delay *is* implied, something more is also signified.

It is observed, that in the 4th verse of the 2d chapter, Daniel begins to write in the Syriac or Chaldee, and continues to do so down to the 8th chapter, either because the events there recorded chiefly affected the Chaldeans, or because the history of those events was drawn by Daniel from the public records of Babylon written in the Chaldean tongue. Be the cause, however, what it may, the fact is certain; and accordingly in the margin of our Bible, we have the word *buy* given as the sense of

the Chaldee original, though in the text our translators have used the word *gain*. Now, though it is true that the Chaldeans wished to gain time according to the common acceptation of the phrase in English, it is probable that the sense of opportunity was also conveyed by the original expression τὸν καιρὸν. The delay was a mean to an end. The present interpretation was deferred for the purpose of some favourable opportunity either for avoiding any *future* interpretation, if peradventure the King should find his uneasiness subside, and be indisposed to ask for one, or for turning to their advantage any intermediate contingent events, which might assist the astrologers in giving such an interpretation as would be consolatory or satisfactory to the King.

The 8th verse in this chapter of Daniel, therefore, seems to me to signify, I know of a certainty that you would, by all means, obtain a more favourable opportunity for avoiding explanation altogether, or attempting it with better effect, because ye see that the thing is gone from me, that is, not as some interpreters say, the edict for your destruction has been already issued by me, but because the particulars of the dream itself are gone from me—for it is plain from the context that the King's spirit had been troubled—that the Chaldeans had promised to show the interpretation if he could tell them the dream—and that the King in his reply insists upon being informed of the dream itself, as well as of the interpretation, when from the agitation of his mind he had only a dim and confused recollection of what he had dreamed.

The expression ἐξαγοράζεσθαι τὸν καιρὸν became it should seem proverbial amongst the Hellenistic Jews. It acquired the general signification of gaining favourable opportunities; and the specific use to which those opportunities were to be applied, may sometimes have been expressly stated in speaking or writing, though we are ourselves left to collect it from the context, in the passages where the phrase occurs in the New Testament, as well as in Daniel.

In the 5th chapter of the Ephesians, verses 15 and 16, we read this, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." It is observable now that in the foregoing passage, as well as in the Epistle to the Colossians, the Apostle employs the very same words, redeeming the time, when he is inculcating the very same duty of circumspection and prudence; and that the same ground existed for this circumspection in the immoral habits and malicious disposition of the adversaries to Christianity.

The Ephesians were to walk circumspectly and redeem the time, because the days were evil. The Colossians were to walk in wisdom to those that were without, and to redeem the time, because in the inhuman reign of Nero St. Paul was already, not, as has sometimes been supposed erroneously, cast into prison at Rome, but fastened according to the Roman custom upon his right hand by a chain, one extremity of which was holden by a soldier, who walked about with him and guarded him—because these bonds were thrown upon him for speaking the mystery of Christ—and because the dangers

which had already overtaken St. Paul impended more or less over his Colossian converts. For you will take notice, the reason which is directly stated in the text of the Epistle to the Ephesians is to be inferred from a circumstance, which is stated in verse 3 chapter 4 of the Epistle to the Colossians, "withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."

Now the opportunity for gaining a more important and serious hearing to the preachers of the gospel would be the result of the wisdom with which they and their followers walked towards those that were without; and the want of such wisdom would have occasioned the loss of such opportunity—would have created additional obstacles to the propagation of the gospel, and additional difficulties to those who were already converted to it.

Having explained τὸν καιρὸν as signifying opportunity, I think it proper for me to explore the probable import of ἐξαγοραζόμενοι. The word ἐξαγοράζω specifically signifies to *recover by purchase that which is the property of another*; and in this sense it does not occur in the New Testament. But in the Epistle to the Galatians it is metaphorically transferred to the redemption of mankind from their captivity to sin by the blood of Christ. With a greater latitude of metaphor it is used by St. Paul, both in my text and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, for obtaining some object with the same earnestness, solicitude, and intense application of the whole

mind, which persons engaged in bargains employ for pecuniary advantages.

It may be worth while to add, that in order to express emphatically the idea of securing, or obtaining, passages, borrowed from the act of buying, occur in other writers, and have been adduced by Hammond, Wolfius, and other learned men, to illustrate the word now under consideration in the writings of St. Paul. Thus Plutarch says of Scipio, that seeing the blind fury of the enemies, ἔλεγει ὠνεῖσθαι τοῦ χρόνου τὴν ἀσφάλειαν—He said he would purchase, or effectually secure safety, by paying or giving time. And so a father of the Christian church, speaking of Julian's dissimulation, says ὁ μὲν ἐξωνούμενος τὸν καιρὸν, purchasing or anxiously securing for himself a more favourable opportunity for crushing those whom he hated. (See Greg. Nazian. Orat. Cont. Julien, quoted by Hammond upon Ephes. cap. v. verse 16.)

Thus we see how the terms which originally signified the act of purchasing are figuratively applied to the act of securing any future object, with the cautious and vigilant attention of purchasers. What was the specific object in the view of the Apostle, when he wrote to the Ephesians, is clearly, and I think accurately, stated in the words of Schleusner, a well known lexicographer, Quærite opportunitatem sancte vivendi et alios emendandi, hoc enim, quo vivimus, tempore multa sunt virtutis impedimenta. Nearly the same object was in the mind of the Apostle, when he instructed the Colossians to walk in wisdom to them that are without. They were so to walk

if possible, as to avoid the dangers to which they were exposed from the malice and obstinacy of their enemies. They were to let their spirit be πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, always mild and courteous, as became the teachers of a benevolent religion, who were assisted by the grace of God; and as men, who, if called upon before magistrates or others to give an account of the hope that was in them, knew how they ought to answer in a way at once most conducive to the credit of their own religion—to the preservation of their own safety in evil times, and so as to soften rather than to exasperate the prejudices of their persecutors.

The Colossians are not called upon to recover any past time, which had been lost or mis-spent, but to attend to the present difficulties and perils by which they were surrounded, and to be upon the watch to avail themselves of any future occasion which might occur, for discharging their christian duties, and perhaps propagating the Christian faith, at once with safety to themselves, and with usefulness to the sacred cause in which they were engaged.

They were to treat with gentleness the mistakes and prepossessions even of unbelievers. They were to restrain the excesses of that zeal, which often accompanies recent conversion, especially where the conviction of men is deep and unfeigned, and when the subjects upon which they are convinced visibly relate to the glory of God, and the happiness of his creatures. They were to endure patiently, but not to provoke rashly, the rigours of persecution. They

were to die if the honour of their master required it, but to live, as their master himself had upon all proper occasions done before them, with circumspection. They were to promote the honour of their religion by the very same measures, which contributed to their personal security. They were to draw the attention of their hearers, not only to the sincerity of their faith, and the ardour of their piety, but to the mildness of their tempers, and the innocence of their lives. They were so to teach the word of God, so to hear it, and so to obey it, that every observer who believed not, might be won over to the worship of God, and report that God of a truth guided the understandings, and sanctified the heart of every man who professed himself the disciple of a crucified Redeemer. See Cor. 1st. Epist. chap. xiv. ver. 26.

But if the precept to walk in wisdom, to those who were without, was practicable and obligatory in the very earliest ages of Christianity, surely, my brethren, the important and happy change of circumstances under which we now live, by facilitating the practice, increases the obligation. Religion now is not insulted, but reverenced—not persecuted, but protected by the civil magistrate. The teachers of it, therefore, have less occasion for the virtue of fortitude than the primitive Christians. But the duties we have to discharge, though in appearance less arduous, are in the highest degree beneficial to our fellow creatures, and display, in a most amiable point of view, the social and benevolent character of the Gospel.

Under every form of government, and in every

stage of civilization and knowledge, we shall be required to enlighten the ignorant, to soften the obstinate, and to conciliate the hostile. In matters of opinion we have to contend sometimes with the prepossessions which our Christian brethren have imbibed in early education—sometimes with the errors into which they have been seduced by impetuous and dogmatical interpreters of holy writ, and often with the pride of intellectual superiority—with fondness for innovation, and various other instances of weakness or passion, which disturb the repose of the Christian world.

Indeed, the contentions that have arisen between the different sects of Christians, are sometimes accompanied by more fierceness, and productive of more mischief, even than the disputes in which they have been engaged with the avowed and common enemies of the Christian cause. The very circumstance of appeal to a common standard, has perpetuated and inflamed the evils of controversy. To the heated imagination and the angry temper of a bigot, heresy may appear less venial than infidelity itself—it has been thought to imply a perverse and stubborn determination to corrupt the word of God in the very persons who acknowledge its supreme authority and its divine original; and, in consequence of this hardy and inhuman assumption, Christians have been led not only to cast the foulest reproaches, but to inflict the severest punishments upon their deluded brethren.

The effect of these severities shows plainly the importance of the Apostle's precept; for circum-

spection and moderation would often have enabled men to correct the errors and to assuage the prejudices of those fellow creatures, whom they have in vain endeavoured to silence by the bitterness of invective or by the rigour of persecution. It must, however, be confessed that by the progress of useful knowledge, and civilized manners in the present state of the world, the auspicious effects of both have extended themselves to religious controversy. The inutility as well as the injustice of persecution is now generally acknowledged; and the freedom with which religious opinions are discussed has gradually introduced into the discussion a spirit of mutual respect for the ability, mutual tenderness to the supposed mistakes, and mutual confidence in the good intentions of the disputants. The secret and pernicious influence of contention for worldly profits and worldly honours is considerably diminished in the investigation of sacred objects. The good sense of an enlightened world has thrown a check upon that savage licentiousness of reproach, which too often disgraced the exertions of men eminently distinguished, not only by their talents and their learning, but the sincerity of their conviction and the uprightness of their views.

This improvement in the discussion of speculative questions has been attended by an increase of wisdom in the management of matters more immediately connected with practice. We have not ceased indeed to insist upon the loathsome nature, and to expatiate upon the terrible consequences of vice; but in our endeavours to reform

the vicious, we abstain from unnecessary and acrimonious reproach; and even when the case of the offender is marked by circumstances of peculiar effrontery or obduracy, we feel a reluctance in pointing out to him the deformity of his *personal* misconduct; and having impressed him with the terrors of the Lord, we gladly seize any opportunity of inviting him to perseverance in amendment, by presenting to his mind the encouragements which the proper mercies of heaven authorize us to hold forth to the sincere and contrite penitent.

Such must ever be the duty of Christian teachers; and such too, I doubt not, is the usual conduct of those who support and adorn the religious establishment of this country. But the wisdom in which they thus walk, while it does honour to the religion which they profess, and while it promotes the spiritual improvement of their fellow creatures, implies no inconsiderable degree of merit in them; for it is the result of a steady command over those passions which are too prone to run to excess, from the very consciousness that we are endeavouring to uphold a most honourable and important cause. It requires a total exemption from that pharisaical spirit, which leads us to think more highly of own righteousness, or our own sagacity, than we ought to think. It proceeds from that soundness of judgment, which enables us not only to balance impartially the evidence that may be adduced upon every side of controverted opinions, but to estimate rightly the comparative

value of the opinions themselves, and to perceive that each may have some colourings of probability, and that each may be entertained without the imputation of guilt or folly to individuals, without injury to the general efficacy or credibility of revelation itself. It shows an accurate and comprehensive view of the intricate and delicate relations which subsist between moral causes and effects, and a salutary habit of adopting general principles to the real exigencies of particular times and places, and of particular persons and things. It marks that lovely and useful mixture of good sense with good nature, which impels us to separate all the complicated circumstances of human action—to look at the brighter as well as the darker parts of the human character—to appreciate and welcome all the various extenuations of human faults which can be laid to the account of human infirmity alone—and to mitigate the seeming harshness even of well-founded censure and well-meant advice, by mingling with them the soft and soothing balm of religious consolation.

Such is the wisdom which as Christians we are bound to exercise, even in the most favourable situations, and by which we prevent or alleviate the most formidable obstacles to the belief of truth, and to the practice of virtue.

But while we congratulate ourselves and the cause, which is most dear to us, upon the advantages which distinguish our own country, it is impossible for serious and intelligent men to lose sight of the unusual and complicated dangers

which for some time, and in some quarters, have threatened the noblest interests of morality and piety.

Probable it is that many of those dangers might have been averted or lessened by a steady adherence to the duty of walking in wisdom towards those that were without—by a timely reformation of such abuses as from various causes had gradually obscured the doctrines and disgraced the discipline of some Christian churches—by a spirit of dispassionate and sober investigation upon many controverted articles of faith—by a prudent relaxation of human decisions upon opinions not very intimately connected with the honour of the Gospel, or with the salvation of its professors—and by the judicious use of argument rather than of reproach, and of persuasion rather than of compulsion towards every secret, and, I add, every open enemy to revelation. But as such precautions were in too many instances unhappily neglected, and as, in consequence of that neglect, infidelity has been more eagerly disseminated, and more undisguisedly avowed, it well becomes us to consider what expedients we ought to employ, and by what spirit we ought to be actuated in our endeavours to impede the progress of those evils, which have justly given an alarm to the Christian world.

To the use of ridicule we should object, as approaching to levity and profaneness, when introduced upon topics which relate to the existence, the attributes, the ordinary and extraordinary dispensations of an omniscient and Almighty Deity—which embrace the duties of moral and rational beings in all

their various relations to God and man—and which most nearly affect their comfort and happiness in the present life, and their most precious interests in the life to come. Equally should we be upon our guard against all illiberal and acrimonious language, even towards persons, who differ from us upon points, where our own enquiries have been most diligent, and our own assent is most sincere.

If indeed the benevolent spirit of our religion is really felt by those who undertake the defence of it, they will have a fearful sense of the difficulties and obscurities in which it has pleased the moral Governor of the Universe to leave many subjects of abstract speculation. They will separate the motives and personal characters of men from their arguments, and in confuting the one they will be cautious not to misinterpret or to insult the other.

Prepared alike for meeting with good or evil report in the defence of truth, they will never swerve from that wisdom which forbids them to provoke where they may conciliate, and where by conciliation they may obtain a more favourable reception to the correctness of their reasonings and the seriousness of their expostulations.

Thus adorning by their prudence and their moderation that holy religion, which they profess, and are anxious to vindicate, they will be content to leave the issue of their well intended labours in the hands of that Being, who in his own good time will afford to truth its fullest share of triumph, and who often employs the meekness and benevolence of his creatures as the most powerful instruments for turning

the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

The proofs of revelation are always laid before the human understanding with increased efficacy, when accompanied by visible marks of its salutary influence upon the hearts and lives of those who contend for it as the rule of their actions here, and as the foundation of their best hopes hereafter.

More especially then are we called upon to take heed unto our ways in an age when the advocates of infidelity are so numerous, so active, and some of them perhaps so largely gifted with abilities to make the worse appear the better cause. If then we are solicitous to prove ourselves worthy of that sacred name by which we are called—to walk in wisdom towards those that are without—and to promote the glory of God by diffusing a spirit of peace and good will among men, we shall in truth "redeem the time"—we shall avail ourselves of all the opportunities which God has afforded us for contributing to the spiritual welfare of our fellow creatures—and in thus diligently and faithfully laying out the talents entrusted to us for the good of others, we shall effectually secure our own salvation in the awful day of judgment.

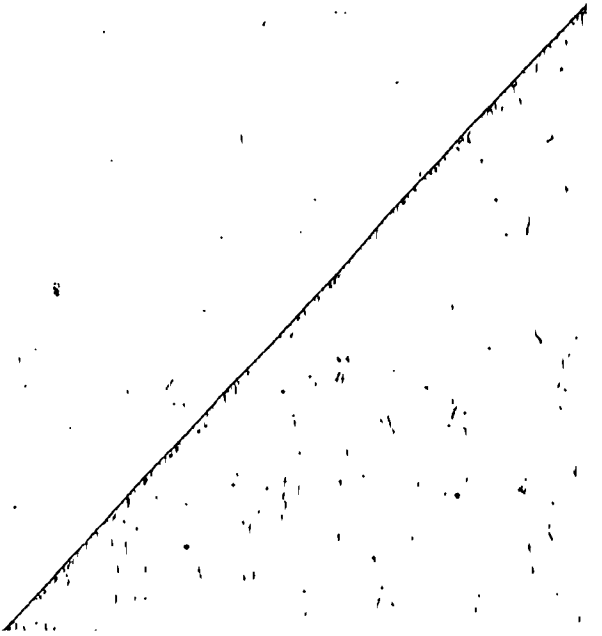
END OF VOLUME V.

ERRATA TO VOL. V.

Page 5, line 15, *for* more abstract, *read* mere abstract.
14, — 16, *for* opportunity, *read* importunity.
19, — 17, *for* motion, *read* motions.
57, — 20, *for* judiciously, *read* judicially.
98, — 27, *for* case, *read* cause.
144, — 5, *for* Gomora, *read* Gemera.
159, — 10, *for* yet, *read* yes.
239, — 10, *for* mind, *read* kind.
263, — 13, *for* house, *read* houses.
291, — 14, *for* Greeks, *read* Greek.
310, — penult, *after* defeat *dele* by.
321, — 22, *for* attacked, *read* attached.
342, — 9, *for the* age, *read* the *age*.
406, — 7, *for* they equally, *read* they were equally.
440, — 8, *dele* advice.
450, — 19, *for* resolution, *read* resurrection.
491, — 28, *for* It may with, *read*-It may be with.
494, — 12, *after* thus far *add* only.
532, — 19, *for* ἑστῶτε, *read* ἑστῶτα.
553, — 5 *from bottom*, *for* amicorum, *read* inimicorum.
572, — 14, *after* adversary, insert a comma.
596, — 26, *for* such, *read* such was.
598, — 11, *for* is, *read* it.
624, — 26, *after* fewer, *dele* who.
665, — 11, *for* hath, *read* have.
688, — 18, *for* person, *read* persons.
696, — penult, *for* Rules, *read* Rulers.

J. B. Nichols and Son, 25, Parliament Street.

00097220



Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 24 February, 2016